



*Drishti IAS Presents...*



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# ART & CULTURE

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## GULAAL GOTA

### *Why in News?*

In Jaipur, Rajasthan, the age-old tradition of celebrating Holi continues. This celebration involves the practice of “**Gulaal Gota**,” a unique tradition dating back around 400 years.

### *What is Gulaal Gota?*

#### *History:*

- Gulaal Gota is a small ball made of lac, filled with dry gulaal, and weighs around 20 grams when filled.
  - Lac is a resinous substance that is secreted by certain insects. The **female scale insect is one of the sources of lac.**
  - To produce 1 kg of lac resin, around 300,000 insects are killed. The lac insects also **yield resin, lac dye and lac wax.**

### *Raw materials and Artisan Community*

- Lac, the primary raw material for Gulaal Gota, is sourced from **chhattisgarh and jharkhand**
- Gulaal Gotas are made by Muslim lac makers, known as Manihaars, in Jaipur, who learned lac-making from Hindu lac makers in Bagru, a town near Jaipur.

### *Historical Significance and Economic Aspects:*

- Established in **1727 by Sawai Jai Singh II**, Jaipur, known for its vibrant culture, dedicates a lane at the **Tripoliya Bazaar to the Manihar community.**
- Named “**Manihaaron ka Raasta**,” this lane remains a hub for selling lac bangles, jewellery, and Gulaal Gota, preserving the city’s artistic legacy to this day.
- In the past, kings would ride through the city on elephant backs on Holi and toss Gulaal Gotas to the public, and the erstwhile royal family ordered Gulaal Gota at its palace for the festival.

### *Unique Holi Traditions Across India*

- **Holla Mohalla in Punjab:**
  - Integral to Sikh tradition, Holla Mohalla is observed

in Anandpur Sahib with martial arts demonstrations, poetry, and kirtans.

### ➤ **Phaguwa in Bihar:**

- Phaguwa, also known as Phagwah or Phalgunotsava, celebrates the arrival of spring and the harvest season.
  - Folk songs and Holika Dahan precede the colourful festivities, creating a vibrant environment.

## Pandavula Gutta and Ramgarh Crater as Geo-Heritage Sites

### *Why in News?*

Pandavula Gutta, an ancient geological marvel predating the Himalayan hills, has been officially designated as the **sole Geo-heritage site in Telangana.**

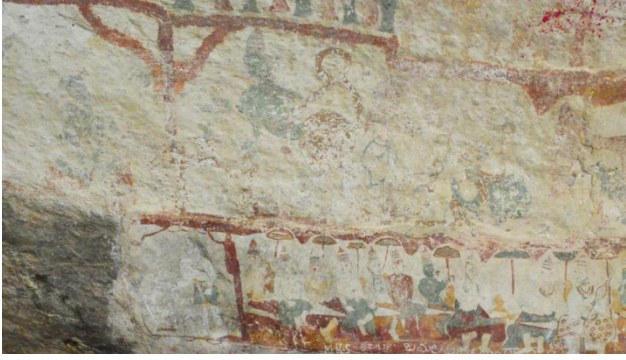
- Also, the Rajasthan government designates **Ramgarh Crater in Baran district** as a geo-heritage site.

### *What are the Key Facts About Pandavula Gutta?*

- Pandavula Konda (Pandavula Gutta) is a geological marvel situated in the **Jayashankar Bhupalpally district of Telangana.**
- Pandavula Gutta is rich in terms of rock shelters, and habitation from **the Mesolithic period (about 10,000 B.C. to 8,000 B.C.) to mediaeval times.**
- Pandavula Gutta boasts **Palaeolithic (500,000 BCE–10,000 BCE)** cave paintings offering a glimpse into prehistoric life.
  - The cave paintings depict wildlife like Bison, Antelope, Tiger, and Leopard, as well as **shapes like swastika symbols, circles, squares, and weapons.**
  - The paintings also feature geometrical designs and impressions in green, red, yellow, and white pigment colours.
- The topography of Pandavula Gutta makes it a popular destination for rock climbing enthusiasts.

Note:





### What are the Key Facts About Ramgarh Crater?

- Ramgarh Crater, Rajasthan formed around **165 million years ago** due to a **meteor** impact, this 3-km diameter crater provides essential ecosystem services, contributing to the region's ecological balance and biodiversity.
- Recognised as a **Ramgarh Conservation Reserve under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, the Ramgarh Crater is protected to preserve its unique ecological and cultural heritage.
- It is declared as the Ramgarh Conservation Reserve under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the presence of **Pushkar Talab complex within the crater**, recognised as **wetlands** under **Wetland (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2017**.



### Geo-Heritage Site/National Geological Monuments

- Geoheritage refers to **sites or areas with significant scientific, educational, cultural, or aesthetic value** due to their geological features.

These sites may have **unique rock formations, fossils, or landscapes** that are important for education, research, cultural significance, or visual appeal. They can also contribute to local and regional economies as tourist destinations.

GSI or the respective State governments take necessary measures to protect these sites.

- The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** declares geo-heritage sites/**national geological monuments** for protection and maintenance.

GSI is a scientific agency that was founded in 1851 to find **coal deposits for the Railways**. The GSI is **headquartered in Kolkata**, and is an attached office to the **Ministry of Mines**. Its main functions include creating and updating national geoscientific information, and assessing mineral resources.

## ASI Survey of Bhojshala Complex

### Why in News?

The Indore Bench of the Madhya Pradesh **High Court** has ordered the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** to conduct a scientific survey of the **Bhojshala Temple-Kamal Maula Mosque complex** in Dhar district to clarify its original nature.

### What is the Bhojshala Temple-Kamal Maula Mosque Complex?

- **About:**
  - The **Bhojshala Temple-Kamal Maula Mosque complex** was originally a temple of **goddess Sarasvati** built by **Parawara King Bhoja** in **11<sup>th</sup> Century AD**.
  - The mosque is built using structural members of the temple. The monument also retains some slabs inscribed with **Sanskrit and Prakrit** literary works.
  - Noted as a great patron of art and literature, **King Bhoja** is said to have established a school, now known as **Bhojashala**.
  - Under an agreement with the ASI, Hindus perform puja in the temple every Tuesday, and Muslims offer Namaz every Friday.

Note:

### What are the Methods Adopted by the ASI for Excavation?

- **Invasive Methods:**
  - **Excavation**, the most invasive **archaeological technique**, involves digging using **stratigraphic principles** to gather information about the past while simultaneously destroying it.
    - **Stratigraphy** is adopted by archaeologists to peel off layers in reverse order and understand the **logical formation of the archaeological record**.
- **Non-Invasive Methods:** Non-invasive methods are used when investigations are undertaken inside a **built structure** and no excavation is permitted. It has several Methods:
  - **Active Methods:** Inject energy into the ground and measure the response. The methods provide an estimate of the **ground's material properties**, such as **density, electrical resistance, and wave velocity**.
    - **Seismic Techniques:** Use shock waves to study subsurface structures.
    - **Electromagnetic Methods:** Measure electromagnetic responses after energy injection.
  - **Passive Methods:** Measure existing physical properties.
    - **Magnetometry:** Detect magnetic anomalies caused by buried structures.
    - **Gravity Surveying:** Measure gravitational force variations due to subsurface features.
  - **Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR):**
    - ASI uses GPR to produce a **3-D model** of buried archaeological features.
    - GPR operates by introducing a short radar impulse from a surface antenna and records the time and magnitude of return signals from the subsoil.
    - Radar beam spreads like a cone, causing reflections before the antenna passes over the object.
    - Radar beams spread out in a cone, leading to reflections that may not directly correspond to physical dimensions, creating false images.
  - **Carbon Dating:**
    - Determine **organic material age** by measuring carbon content (C-14).

### Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ASI, under the **Ministry of Culture**, is the premier organization for the archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.
- It administers more than 3650 ancient monuments, archaeological sites, and remains of national importance.
- Its activities include carrying out surveys of antiquarian remains, exploration and excavation of archaeological sites, conservation and maintenance of protected monuments, etc.
- It was founded in 1861 by **Alexander Cunningham**- the first Director-General of ASI. Alexander Cunningham is also known as the "**Father of Indian Archaeology**".

## Temple Discoveries Highlight Chalukya Expansion

### Why in News?

Archaeologists from the **Public Research Institute of History, Archaeology, and Heritage (PRIHAH)** have unearthed two ancient temples dating back to the **Badami Chalukyan period**, along with a rare inscription, in **Mudimanikyam village** of Nalgonda district, **Telangana**.

### What are the Major Highlights of the Recent Excavation?

- **Temples:** Located at the end of the village, the two temples date back to between 543 AD and 750 AD, corresponding to the rule of the **Badami Chalukyas**.
  - They showcase unique architectural styles, blending **Badami Chalukyan and Kadamba Nagara** style in the Rekha nagara format.
  - In one temple, **apanavattam (base of a Shiva lingam)** in the sanctum sanctorum has been found.
  - In another, a **Vishnu idol** was recovered.
- **Inscription:** The discovery also includes an inscription, labeled as '**Gandaloranru**', dating back to the **8th or 9th Century AD**.

Note:



### What are the Key Features Related to the Chalukya Dynasty?

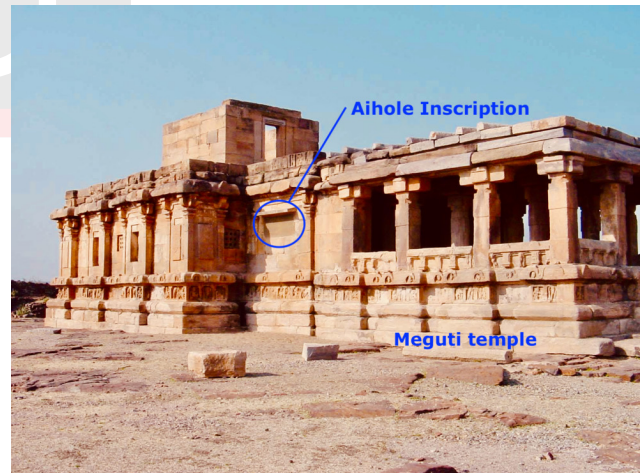
- **About:** The Chalukya dynasty governed significant territories in southern and central India from the 6th to the 12th centuries.
  - It comprised three distinct dynasties: the **Chalukyas of Badami**, the **Eastern Chalukyas**, and the **Western Chalukyas**.
  - The Chalukyas of Badami, originating in **Vatapi (modern Badami in Karnataka)**, ruled from the early 6<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century, reaching their zenith **under Pulakeshin II**.
  - After Pulakeshin II's reign, the Eastern Chalukyas emerged as an independent kingdom in the eastern Deccan, centred around **Vengi (in present-day Andhra Pradesh)** until the 11<sup>th</sup> century.
- **Foundation:** **Pulikesin I** (c. 535-566 CE) is credited with fortifying a hill near Badami, laying the foundation for the Chalukya dynasty's ascendancy.
  - The **city of Badami** was formally founded by **Kirtivarman (566-597)**, serving as the epicentre of Chalukya power and culture.
- **Architecture:** Historically, in Deccan, Chalukyas introduced the technique of building temples **using soft sandstones as medium**.
  - Their temples are grouped into two: **excavated cave temples and structural temples**.
    - Badami is known for both structural and excavated cave temples.
    - **Pattadakal and Aihole** are popular for structural temples.
- **Literary:** Chalukya rulers utilised **Sanskrit for official inscriptions**, showcasing their commitment to classical literature and language.

- Despite Sanskrit's prominence, the Chalukyas also acknowledged the significance of regional languages like **Kannada**, recognizing them as the language of the people.

- **Painting:** Chalukyas adopted the **Vakataka style in painting**. Paintings are found in a cave temple dedicated to Vishnu in Badami.

### Aihole Inscription of Pulikesin II:

- Situated in the **Megudi temple at Aihole, Karnataka**, the Aihole inscription provides invaluable insights into Chalukya history and achievements.
  - Aihole is considered as the cradle of Indian temple architecture.
- Crafted by the renowned poet **Ravikriti**, the inscription is a lyrical tribute to the Chalukya dynasty, particularly **King Pulakesin II**, lauded as the embodiment of truth (Sathyasraya).
- The inscription chronicles the Chalukya dynasty's triumphs over adversaries, including the renowned defeat of **Harshavardhana**.



## GI Tag to Majuli masks, Manuscript and Narasapur Crochet Lace Craft

### Why in News?

The traditional **crochet lace craft of Narasapur in Andhra Pradesh** receives a **Geographical Indications (GI) tag** to preserve its unique identity amidst competition from machine-made lace from China.

Note:



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- Similarly, **Majuli masks and manuscript painting in Assam** gain GI recognition, enhancing their cultural significance and safeguarding against decline.

### What are the Key Highlights About Narasapur Crochet Lace Craft?



- **Narasapur Crochet Lace Craft:**
  - The crochet lace craft originated in **1844** and endured challenges like the **Indian famine (1899)** and the **Great Depression (1929)**. By the early 1900s, more than 2,000 women were involved in lace crafting in the **Godavari region**, highlighting its cultural importance.
  - The craft involves transforming thin **cotton threads into intricate artefacts** using delicate **crochet needles** of varying sizes.
  - Artisans use a single crochet hook to create loops and interlocking stitches, forming delicate lace patterns.
  - Narsapur's **hand-made crochet industry produces** a diverse range of products made of lace— **garments, home furnishings and accessories** including Doilies, Pillow covers, Cushion covers, Bedspreads, Table-runners, Table cloths, Hand purses, Caps, Tops, Stoles, Lampshades, and Wall hangings.
  - Narsapur's crochet lace products find their way to global markets, with exports reaching destinations such as the UK, USA, and France.

- **Geographical Indication (GI) Tag:**

- The **Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** registered the craft in the **Geographical Indications Registry (GIR)**, certifying that the craft is geographically limited to **19 mandals in West Godavari and Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Konaseema districts** in the Godavari region.

### What are Majuli masks and Majuli Manuscript Painting?

- **Majuli Masks:**

- Majuli masks are intricately crafted masks made by hand using traditional techniques.
- The handmade masks are traditionally used to **depict characters in bhaonas (a traditional form of entertainment, with religious messages), or theatrical performances** with devotional messages under the **neo-Vaishnavite tradition**, introduced by the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century reformer saint **Srimanta Sankardeva**.
  - The masks can depict gods, goddesses, demons, animals and birds — Ravana, Garuda, Narasimha, Hanuman, Varaha Surpanakha all feature among the masks.
- Made from a variety of materials including bamboo, clay, dung, cloth, cotton, and wood, the masks can vary in size from covering just the face to encompassing the entire head and body of the performer.
- Traditional practitioners are modernizing Majuli mask-making by moving beyond the confines of **sattras (Monastery)** to embrace contemporary contexts.
  - Sattras were founded by Srimanta Sankardev and his disciples to serve as centres of religious, social, and cultural reform.
  - Majuli, with its 22 sattras, is a hub for these cultural practices. The mask-making tradition is predominantly found in four sattras: **Samaguri Sattra, Natun Samaguri Sattra, Bihimpur Sattra, and Alengi Narasimha Sattra**.

Note:





#### ➤ Majuli Manuscript Painting:

- The manuscript paintings of Majuli are a form of religious art closely linked to the island's Vaishnavite culture, centred around worship.
- One of the earliest examples of this art form is attributed to Srimanta Sankardev, depicting the AdyaDasama of the Bhagwat Purana in Assamese. It continues to be practised in every sattrā in Majuli.
- **Majuli Manuscript Painting** are inspired by the **Pala school of Painting art.**
  - Pala art refers to the **style of Buddhist art** that developed in the **Pala Empire of eastern India** (8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries). It is characterized by its vibrant colors, detailed work, and emphasis on religious themes.



## Maratha Military Landscapes

### Why in News?

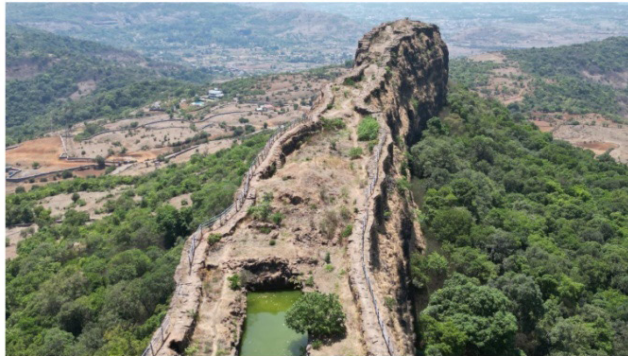
India is set to nominate the “**Maratha Military Landscapes**” for the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage recognition** in 2024-25.

### What are the Maratha Military Landscapes?

- The ‘Maratha Military Landscapes’ is a network of 12 forts and fortifications that represent the **extraordinary military system** and strategy of the Maratha rulers in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries
  - The twelve parts of this nomination are, **Salher Fort, Shivneri Fort, Lohgad, Khanderi Fort, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala Fort, Vijay durg, Sindhudurg** in Maharashtra and **Gingee Fort** in Tamil Nadu.
- The Maratha Military Landscapes of India are included in the **Tentative List of World Heritage sites** in 2021.
  - Maratha Military Landscapes is the **sixth cultural property nominated** for inclusion in the World Heritage List from Maharashtra.
  - This network of forts, varying in hierarchies, scales and typological features, is a result of integrating the landscape, terrain and physiographic characteristics distinctive to the **Western Ghats (Sahyadri Hills), the Konkan Coast, Deccan Plateau and the Eastern Ghats** in the Indian Peninsula.

Note:

- There are more than 390 forts in Maharashtra out of which only 12 forts are selected under the Maratha Military Landscapes of India, of these 8 forts are protected by the **Archaeological Survey of India**.



**Lohagard fort**

- The Maratha Military ideology originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century under the rule of **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** in 1670 CE, extending through subsequent rulers until the Peshwa rule concluded in 1818 CE.

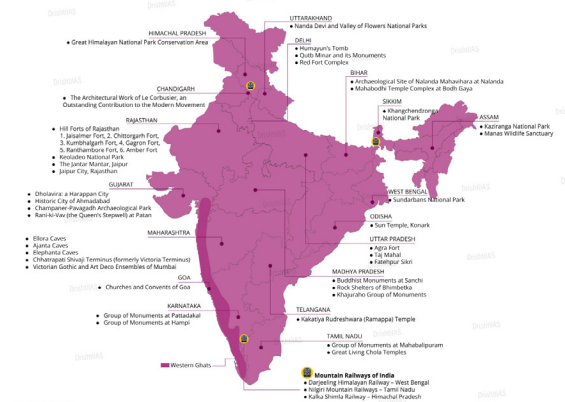


**Raigad Fort**

**Note:**

- At present in India there are **42 World Heritage sites**, out of which **34 are cultural sites**, **7 are natural sites** and **one is mixed sites**.
  - In Maharashtra there are **six World Heritage Sites**, **five cultural and one natural**.
    - These are, **Ajanta Caves (1983)**, **Ellora Caves (1983)**, **Elephanta Caves (1987)**, **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) (2004)**, **Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai (2018)** and **western Ghats of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala is serial property in natural category (2012)**.

**UNESCO World Heritage Sites**



**FACTS**

- Total Number of World Heritage Sites in India: 42
- Total Cultural Heritage Sites: 32
- Total Natural Sites: 7 (Kaziranga National Park, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, Sunderbans National Park, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Park, Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Keoladeo National Park)
- Mixed Site: 1 (Khajuraho Group of Monuments)
- World Heritage Sites Listed First: Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves (all in 1983)
- Latest Addition (2021): Harappan city of Dholavira (40<sup>th</sup> site), Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple (39<sup>th</sup> site)
- Countries With the Most UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Italy (58), China (56), Germany (51), France (49), Spain (49)
- India is 6<sup>th</sup> in number of World Heritage Sites in the World

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- There are 10 selection criteria:

**Selection criteria**

- (i) to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- (ii) to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
- (iii) to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- (iv) to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- (v) to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- (vi) to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
- (vii) to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- (viii) to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- (ix) to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- (x) to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Operational Guidelines (year)	Cultural criteria	Natural criteria
2002	(i) (ii) (iii) (iv) (v) (vi)	(i) (ii) (iii) (iv)
2005	(i) (ii) (iii) (iv) (v) (vi) (vii) (viii) (ix) (x)	(i) (ii) (iii) (iv) (v) (vi) (vii) (viii) (ix) (x)

Note:

- There are **two categories of nomination** cultural and natural criteria, the Maratha Military landscapes is nominated in the category of cultural criteria.
  - There are **six criteria (i to vi) for cultural sites and four criteria (vii to x) for natural sites** for inclusion in the World Heritage List.
- The **Maratha Military Landscapes of India** is nominated under **Criterion (iii), Criterion (iv) and Criterion (vi)**.
- A country can't nominate a property to the **World Heritage List unless it's been on its Tentative List for at least one year**.
- The list of World Heritage Sites is maintained by the International 'World Heritage Programme', administered by the **UNESCO World Heritage Committee**.

## Sri Sri Auniati Satra Vaishnavite Monastery

### *Why in News?*

Sri Sri Auniati Satra is a more than 350-year-old Vaishnavite monastery in Assam's Majuli district.

### *What are the Key Facts about Sri Sri Auniati Satra Vaishnavite Monastery?*

- **Establishment:**
  - The Sri SriAuniati Satra was established in the year 1653 in Majuli, Assam. It has a history of over 350 years, making it **one of the oldest Satras** in the region.
    - A Satra is an **institutional centre for Assamese Vaishnavism**, a bhakti movement that emerged in the **15<sup>th</sup> century**.
  - The Satra is located in Majuli, which is the **largest inhabited river island in the world**. Majuli is situated in the Brahmaputra River in the northeastern state of Assam, India.
- **Religious Significance:**
  - The Satra is a **center of Assamese Vaishnavism**, a bhakti movement that revolves around the worship of Lord Krishna.
  - The original idol of **Lord Krishna in the form of Govinda** is said to have been brought from the Lord Jagannath Temple at Puri.
- **Cultural Heritage:**
  - **Vaishnavite monasteries like Auniati Satra** are not only places of worship but **also centers for the preservation of traditional art forms, literature, and cultural practices**.

- **Bhaona and Traditional Art Forms:**
  - **Bhaona, a traditional art form, is practiced at the Satra**. It is a combination of acting, music, and musical instruments.
  - The main drama is usually preceded by a **musical performance called the Gayan-Bayan**.

### *What are the Key Facts Related to Majuli Island?*

- Majuli is a river island located in the Brahmaputra River in the northeastern state of Assam, India. It is recognized as the largest river island in the world.
- The island is a result of the dynamics of the Brahmaputra River system, characterized by the shifting courses and channels of the river.
- The island is surrounded by the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries, creating a unique fluvial landform. **Wetlands known as Beels and Chaporis (islets)** contribute to the ecological diversity of the region.

### *What is Vaishnavism?*

- **About:**
  - Vaishnavism is a **prominent bhakti (devotional) movement within Hinduism**, and it emphasises deep devotion and love towards the god Vishnu and his various incarnations.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Devotion to Vishnu:** The central focus of Vaishnavism is devotion (bhakti) to Vishnu, who is considered the Supreme Being and the sustainer of the universe. Vaishnavas believe in a personal relationship with Vishnu, expressing love, reverence, and devotion toward the deity.
  - **Dashavatara:** The ten avatars of Vishnu are Matsya (fish), Kurma (turtle), Varaha (boar), Narasimha (half-man, half-lion), Vamana (dwarf), Parashurama (the warrior with an axe), Rama (the prince of Ayodhya), Krishna (the divine cowherd), Buddha (the enlightened one), and Kalki (the future warrior on a white horse).
  - **Bhakti and Liberation:** Vaishnavism places a strong **emphasis on the path of bhakti**, which involves **intense devotion and love toward Vishnu**. The ultimate goal for many Vaishnavas is liberation (moksha) from the **cycle of birth and death (samsara)** and union with Vishnu.

Note:

- **Variety of Sects:** Vaishnavism encompasses a variety of sects and groups with different interpretations of the relationship between the individual soul (jiva) and God. Some sects emphasise **qualified nondualism (vishishtadvaita)**, while others subscribe to **dualism (dvaita) or pure nondualism (shuddhadvaita)**.
  - **Srivaishnava Sect:** Emphasises qualified nondualism based on the teachings of Ramanuja.
  - **Madhva Sect:** Professes dualism, asserting the separate existence of God and the soul, following the philosophy of Madhva.
  - **Pushtimarg Sect:** Maintains pure nondualism according to Vallabhacharya's teachings.
  - **Gaudiya Sect:** Founded by Chaitanya, teaches inconceivable duality and nonduality.

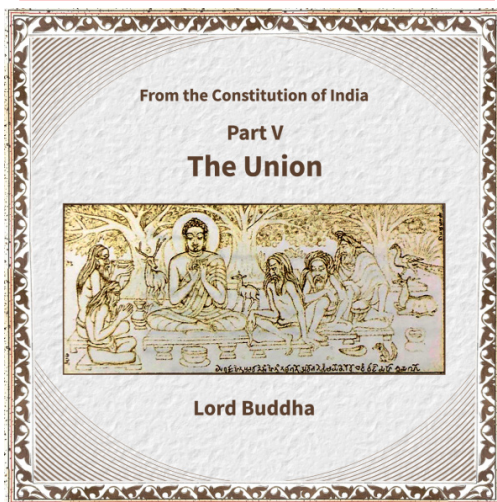
## Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace

### Why in News?

Recently, the **Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP)**, a voluntary mass movement of **Buddhists** in Asia convened its **12th General Assembly** in New Delhi.

### What are the Major Highlights of the 12th General Assembly of ABCP?

- **Theme: ABCP - The Buddhist Voice of Global South**, reflects India's commitment, as demonstrated through its **G20 presidency** and the **Voice of Global South Summit**.
  - Proactive role of India was highlighted in developing the Buddhist circuit and establishing the **India International Centre for Buddhist Culture**.



### What is the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace?

- **About:** ABCP was founded in **1970 at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia** as a voluntary movement of followers of Buddhism with both monastic (monks) and lay members.
  - ABCP then emerged as a collaborative effort of Buddhist dignitaries from **India, Mongolia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, the then USSR, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, South and North Korea**.
- **Headquarters: Gandanthegechenling Monastery** in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
  - The Supreme Head of Mongolian Buddhists is the current ABCP President.
- **Aims of ABCP:**
  - Bring together efforts of Buddhists in support of consolidating universal peace, harmony and cooperation among peoples of Asia.
  - Furthering their economic and social advancement and promoting respect for justice and human dignity.
  - Disseminating the **Buddhist culture**, tradition and heritage.

## Madhika Language on Brink of Extinction

### Why in News?

In the remote colony of Kookanam, near Karivellur grama panchayat, Kerala the **Chakaliya community** is grappling with the imminent loss of its unique language **Madhika**.

- There are only two people left, who are the **last fluent speakers** of Madhika.

### What are the Key Facts about Madhika Language and Chakaliya Community?

- **About Madhika Language:**
  - Madhika is a language with **no script** and is a **blend of Telugu, Tulu, Kannada, and Malayalam**. Despite sounding similar to Kannada, it can bewilder listeners due to its **diverse linguistic influences**.
  - Madhika is largely influenced by **Havyaka Kannada**, an old form of Kannada.
    - The neglect of Madhika is attributed to the social stigma associated with the Chakaliya community. They were considered **untouchables**.

Note:

- Due to the lack of documentation (**no script**) and the passing of older speakers, there is a significant risk that Madhika may not survive beyond individuals.
- **About the Chakaliya Community:**
  - The Chakaliya community was **originally nomadic and worshippers of Thiruvengktramana** and Mariamma. They migrated from the hilly regions of Karnataka to **northern Malabar centuries ago**.
  - Originally categorised as a **Scheduled Tribe (ST)**, the community was subsequently reclassified into the **Scheduled Caste (SC)** group in Kerala.

### How is the Linguistic Diversity of India?

- **Indian Linguistic Space:**
  - India has a rich linguistic heritage, with diverse languages and writing systems.
  - Writing in India dates back to the days of the **Indus Valley Civilization**, around four thousand years ago.
  - **Linguistic Survey:**
    - During colonial rule the **first linguistic survey was conducted during 1894 to 1928** and identified **179 languages and 544 dialects**.
    - In 1991, the Census of India listed **1576 mother tongues' with separate grammatical structures and 1796 speech varieties** that are classified as other mother tongues'.
      - As per **UNESCO**, any language spoken by **less than 10,000 persons is considered "potentially endangered"**.
  - **Language Families of India:**
    - There are major language families in India, including **Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austric, Tibeto-Burman, and others**.
- **Threat of Extinction:**
  - **As per People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI)**, a linguistic survey by an NGO (Bhasha Research and Publication Centre), **there are around 400 languages that are at the risk of extinction** in the next 50 years.
    - Most of the languages at risk are spoken by marginal tribes, whose children receive little to no education. If they go to school instructions are often provided in one of India's 22 languages recognized in the Constitution.
  - Languages without scripts have greater risk of extinction like the Bhili language.

- **Initiatives Taken to Conserve Threatened Languages:**
  - **Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (India)**
  - **International Mother Language Day (UNESCO)**

### What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Languages in India?

- **Article 29:**
  - Protects the **interests of minorities**, ensuring that all citizens have the right to preserve their distinct language, script, or culture.
- **Eighth Schedule:**
  - Part XVII of the Indian Constitution deals with the official languages. The Eighth Schedule recognizes 22 official languages.
    - Six languages in India **currently have 'Classical' status**.
- **Article 350A:**
  - Provides that **every state must provide primary education in the mother tongue**.
- **Article 350B:**
  - Provides for the **appointment of a "Special Officer" for linguistic minorities**.
- **Article 351:**
  - Gives power to the **Union government to issue a directive for the development of the Hindi language**.

## Ram Temple

### Why in News?

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024, the Ram temple in Ayodhya was inaugurated, marking the completion of a **200-year-old saga that profoundly impacted India's socio-political landscape**.

- The Ram temple has been designed in the **Nagara Style of Temple Architecture**.
- The story of **Ram is popular from Laos, Cambodia and Thailand in Asia to Guyana in South America to Mauritius in Africa, making Ramayana Popular outside India**.

### What is the Uniqueness of Ram Temple?

- **Traditional Architecture and Construction:**
  - This is a **3-storey temple**, built in the **traditional Nagara style**, standing tall with **pink sandstone from Mirzapur and the hills of Bansi-Paharpur (Rajasthan)**.

Note:

- Temple covers an **expansive 71 acres, showcasing the architectural marvel.**
- **Temple Dimensions:**
  - Spanning 250 feet in width and 161 feet in height, the main temple area covers 2.67 acres, **boasting 390 pillars, 46 doorways, and 5 mandaps.**
- **Unique Features Inside:**
  - The main **Garbh Griha holds the idols of Ram Lalla, accompanied by multiple mandaps, including Rang Mandap & Nritya Mandap.**
- **Innovative Anointment Tradition:**
  - On every Ram Navami at noon, a system of mirrors and lenses will focus the **sun's rays on Ram Lalla's idol.** This unique anointment **requires no electricity, utilizing brass** instead of iron or steel.
- **Sculptor's Contribution:**
  - The idol of five-year-old Ram Lalla, **crafted by Mysuru sculptor Arun Yogiraj,** stands at 51 inches and was consecrated in a special ceremony.
- **Durability and Symbolism:**
  - **No iron has been used in the temple's construction,** designed to endure for at least a millennium.

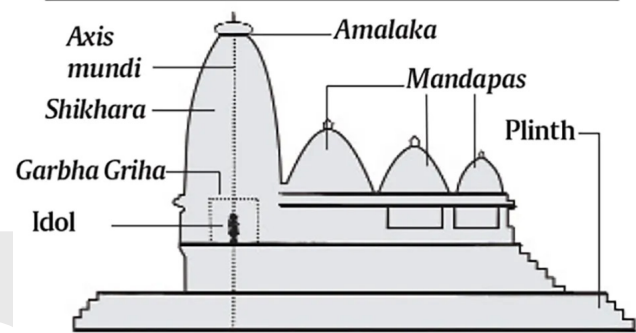
### What is the Nagara Style of Temple Architecture?

- **About:**
  - The Nagara style of temple architecture **emerged sometime in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE,** during the late **Gupta period, in northern India.**
  - It is seen in **juxtaposition with the Dravida style** of southern India, which too emerged in the same period.
- **Distinguished by a Towering Shikhara:**
  - Nagara temples are **built on a raised plinth,** with the **Garbha Griha (sanctum sanctorum)** — where the idol of the deity rests — the most sacred part of the temple.
  - Towering over the Garbha Griha is the **shikhara (literally 'mountain peak'),** the most **distinguishable aspect of Nagara-style temples.**
    - As the name suggests, **shikharas are human-made representations** of the natural and cosmological order, as imagined in Hindu tradition.

- A typical Nagara-style temple **also comprises a circumambulatory passage around the garbhagriha,** and one or more mandapas (halls) on the same axis as it. Elaborate murals and reliefs often adorn its walls.

**Note:** Meru, Mandara and Kailasa are the **first three names amongst the twenty types** of temples described in the early texts, all three are the **names of the Mountain,** which is the axis of the world.

### BASICS OF THE NAGARA STYLE



Based on sketches from E B Havell's *The Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India, 1915.* Not a visual representation of Ayodhya's Ram temple.

- **Five Modes of Nagara Architecture:**
  - **Valabhi:**
    - This mode begins as a **masonry rendering of the barrel-roofed wooden structure,** either simple or with aisles, **familiar through chaitya halls** (prayer halls, most associated with Buddhist shrines). It is a formalization of multi-eave towers, often with a piling up of slabs.
  - **Phamsana:**
    - The Phamsana mode is **characterized by a shikhara** that is a **formalization of multi-eave towers** and involves a piling up of slabs. It is associated with the Early Nagara Style and **represents a progression from the Valabhi mode.**



Note:

○ **Latina:**

- The Latina is a **shikhara that is a single, slightly curved tower** with four sides of equal length. It emerged in the **Gupta heartland, was complete with curvature** by the early seventh century, and spread across the entire breadth of northern India. For three centuries, it was considered the peak of Nagara temple architecture.



○ **Shekhari:**

- The Shekhari mode features a **shikhara with attached sub-spires** or spirelets echoing the main shape. These sub-spires may run up most of the face of the shikhara and can be of more than one size.



○ **Bhumija:**

- The Bhumija mode involves miniature spires arranged in horizontal and vertical rows, creating a **grid-like effect on each face of the shikhara**. The **actual shikhara often approaches a pyramidal shape**, with the curve of the Latina less visible. This style emerged from composite Latinas in the tenth century onwards.



## Bangla for Classical Language, Gangasagar Mela for National Status

### Why in News?

Recently, West Bengal's Chief Minister made headlines with two distinct pursuits: **advocating for classical language status for Bangla**, which is the **world's 7<sup>th</sup> most spoken language** and **seeking national fair status for the Gangasagar Mela**.

### What is Gangasagar Mela?

➤ **About:**

- **Gangasagar Mela**, which takes place during **Makar Sankranti** (mid-January), is said to be India's **second largest pilgrimage gathering** after the Kumbh Mela.

Note:

- This annual pilgrimage draws millions to **Sagar Island at the confluence of the Ganges and Bay of Bengal** and commemorates the legendary King **Bhagirath's descent of the Ganges to Earth**.

#### ➤ Other Major Melas in India:

- **Kumbh Mela**: It is celebrated four times every **12 years**, the site of the observation rotating **between four pilgrimages on the four sacred rivers at Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik**.
  - **Ardha (half) Kumbh Mela** is held at only two places, Haridwar and Allahabad, **every sixth year**.
  - And a **Maha Kumbh** is held after every **144 years**.
- **Pushkar Mela**: Pushkar Mela is an **annual five day camel and livestock fair** held in the town of **Pushkar, Rajasthan**.
  - It is one of the world's largest cattle fairs.
- **Hemis Gompa Fair** : In the northernmost corner of India, the chilly deserts of **Ladakh** celebrate a **300-year-old annual fair** known as the Hemis Gompa Fair.
  - The Hemis Monastery commemorates the fair on the birth anniversary of **Guru Padmasambhava**.

**Note:** Ganga Sagar Mela has recently faced challenges due to **rising sea levels and beach erosion** near the **Kapil Muni temple on Sagar Island**. Despite dredging and **tetrapods to counter erosion**, the situation remains uncertain.

### What are Classical Languages?

#### ➤ About:

- In **2004**, the Government of India decided to create a new category of languages called "**classical languages**".
- In 2006, it laid down the criteria for conferring classical language status. So far, the **6 languages are granted classical language status**.

Sl. No.	Languages	Year of Declaration
1.	Tamil	2004
2.	Sanskrit	2005
3.	Telugu	2008
4.	Kannada	2008
5.	Malayalam	2013
6.	Odia	2014

#### ➤ Criteria:

- High antiquity of **early texts/recorded history** spanning 1,500–2,000 years.
- Possession of a body of ancient literature/texts considered **valuable heritage by generations**.
- Presence of an original literary tradition **not borrowed from another speech community**.
- The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a **discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms** or its offshoots.

**Note:** **8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of Indian Constitution** lists the official languages of the **Republic of India** that currently includes **22 languages** namely: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.

## Shankaracharya

### Why in News?

The decision of the **four Shankaracharya** to abstain from attending the inauguration of the **Ram Temple in Ayodhya** has stirred considerable interest.

### Who are the Shankaracharya?

- **About:** Shankaracharya (teacher of the way of Shankara), is a **religious title** used by the heads of the **four cardinal mathas or peeths** believed to have been established by **Adi Shankara (c 788 CE-820 CE)**.
- According to tradition, they are religious teachers who belong to a **line of teachers** going back all the way to **Adi Shankara himself**, however, **historical evidence regarding the same is scarce** before the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE.

### Who was Adi Shankara?

- **About:** **Adi Shankara or Adi Shankaracharya** was an **8<sup>th</sup>-century Indian philosopher and theologian**, considered one of the most influential figures in the history of Hinduism
  - He is believed to be born in **Kalady village in Kerala**.
  - Initiated into studies by **Govindacharya**, Shankara travelled extensively, challenging philosophical traditions, and **establishing mathas**.

Note:



➤ Major Works/Commentaries:

○ Bhashya Granthas:

- Brahma Sutras
- Isavasya Upanishad
- Kena Upanishad
- Katha Upanishad
- Prasna Upanishad
- Mundaka Upanishad
- Mandukya Upanishad
- Mandukya Karika
- Bhagavad Gita

○ Prakarana Granthas:

- Vivekachudamani
- Aparokshanubhuti
- Upadesasahasri
- Swatma Nirupanam
- Atma bodha
- Sarva Vedanta Sara Samgraha
- Advaita Anubhuti
- Brahma anuchintanam
- Sadachara anusandhanam

○ Hymns and Meditation Verses:

- Sri Ganesa Pancharatnam
- Ganesa Bhujangam
- Subrahmanya Bhujangam

**Note:** However, the authorship of many works attributed to Shankara remains disputed. But Shankara's legacy extends beyond metaphysics and theology, incorporating a near-nationalistic interpretation of **faith, philosophy, and geography**.

**Note:** A '**Statue of Oneness**' dedicated to **Adi Shankaracharya**, standing at a height of 108 feet, has been unveiled on **Mandhata mountain in the Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh**.



Note:

## Harvest Festivals

### Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India has greeted people across the nation on the occasion of **Harvest Festivals Makar Sankranti, Uttarayan, Bhogi, Magh Bihu and Pongal**.

- Along with these festivals Rooster Fights are organized in some parts of Andhra Pradesh.

### What are the Harvest Festivals in India?

➤ **Makar Sankranti:**

- Makar Sankranti denotes the **entry of the sun into the zodiac sign of Makara** (Capricorn) as it travels on its celestial path.
- The day marks the **onset of summer** and the six months auspicious period for Hindus known as Uttarayan – **the northward movement of the sun**.
  - As a part of the official celebration of 'Uttarayan', the Gujarat government has been hosting the **International Kite Festival since 1989**.
- The festivities associated with the day is known by different names in different parts of the country:
  - Lohri by north Indian Hindus and Sikhs,
  - Sukarat in central India,
  - Bhogali Bihu by Assamese Hindus, and
  - Pongal by Tamil and other South Indian Hindus.

➤ **Bihu:**

- It is celebrated when the annual harvest takes place in Assam. People celebrate Magh Bihu/Bhogali Bihu to mark the beginning of the Assamese new year.
- It is believed that the festival started from the time when people of the valley started tilling the land.

➤ **Pongal:**

- The word Pongal means '**overflow**' or '**boiling over**'.
- Also known as Thai Pongal, the four-day occasion is observed in the month of Thai, when crops such as rice are harvested and people show their gratitude to the almighty and the generosity of the land.
- Tamilians celebrate the occasion by making traditional designs known as kolams in their homes with rice powder.





### What is a Rooster Fight?

- **About:**
  - A rooster fight, also known as “**Kodi Pandalu**” in local parlance, involves specially bred and trained birds with sharp leg blades in a small arena, where they fight until one is killed or critically injured. Betting on these fights is common, resulting in significant sums changing hands.
- **Laws Related to Rooster Fights:**
  - Rooster Fights are banned under **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960**. It includes provisions that prohibit the organization and participation in animal fights.
  - Additionally, the Supreme Court of India has issued rulings banning the use of animals for entertainment purposes, including in events like rooster fights.

## Vadnagar: India's Oldest Living City

### Why in News?

A joint study by the Indian Institute of Technology (Kharagpur) and **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has found evidence of cultural continuity in Vadnagar, Gujarat, even after the Harappan collapse.

- The study challenges the notion of a “Dark Age” by providing evidence of cultural continuity in Vadnagar even after the collapse of the **Harappan civilization**.

### What are the Key Highlights of the Excavation at Vadnagar?

- **Age of Settlement:**
  - The study reveals evidence of a human settlement in Vadnagar dating back to as old as 800 BCE.
  - This places the settlement in the **late-Vedic/pre-Buddhist Mahajanapadas** or oligarchic republics period.
- **Multicultural and Multireligious Settlement:**
  - Vadnagar is described as a **multicultural and multireligious settlement** that included **Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, and Islamic** influences.
  - The excavation uncovered **seven cultural stages (periods)**, including Mauryan, Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, Hindu-Solankis, Sultanate-Mughal, and Gaekwad-British colonial rule, up to the present day.
- **Archaeological Artifacts:**
  - Various archaeological artifacts were discovered during the excavation, including pottery, copper, gold, silver, and iron objects.
  - The findings also include **intricately designed bangles** and coin molds from the **Indo-Greek rule**.
- **Buddhist Monastery:**
  - One of the significant discoveries is the presence of one of the oldest Buddhist monasteries in Vadnagar, **adding to the historical and cultural richness** of the settlement.
- **Radiocarbon Dates:**
  - Unpublished radiocarbon dates suggest that the settlement could be as old as 1400 BCE, which challenges the **notion of a Dark Age**.
    - The “Dark Age” refers to the period between the collapse of the **Indus Valley Civilization** and the emergence of the **Iron Age** and cities like Gandhar, Koshal, and Avanti in Indian history.
  - If true, it implies cultural continuity in India for the last 5500 years.

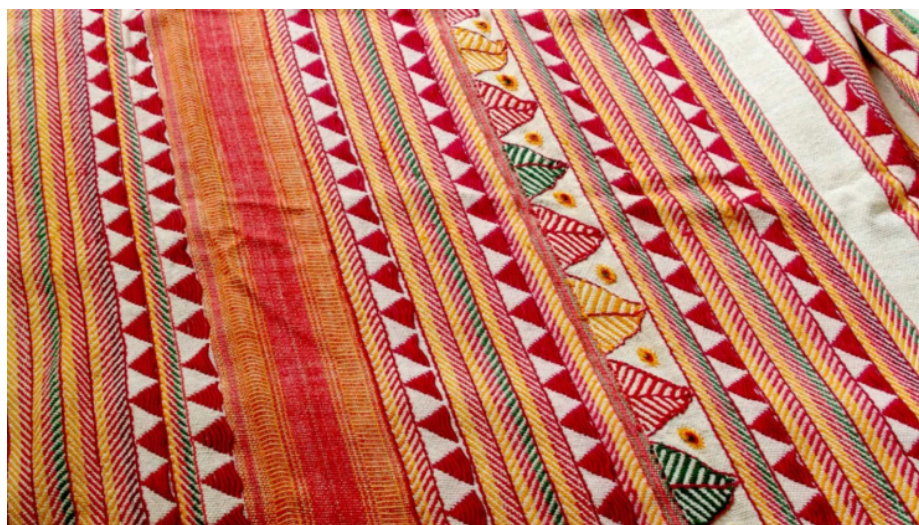
### Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ASI, under the Ministry of Culture, is the premier organization for the archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.

Note:

- Maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance is the prime concern of the ASI.
- Besides it regulate all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**. It also regulates **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972**.
- It was founded in **1861 by Alexander Cunningham**- the first Director-General of ASI. Alexander Cunningham is also known as the "Father of Indian Archaeology".

## GI Tags for Over 17 Products



### ➤ Lanjia Saura Painting:



### Why in News?

Recently, over 17 products from Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, and J&K have received the **Geographical Indication (GI)** tag.

### What Products have Received the GI Tags from Odisha?

#### ➤ Kapdaganda Shawl:

Woven and embroidered by the **women of the Dongria Kondh tribe**, a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)** in the Niyamgiri hills in Odisha's Rayagada and Kalahandi districts, the shawl reflects the rich tribal heritage of the Dongria Kondhs.

- The art form belongs to the Lanjia Saura community, a PVTG largely **residing in the Rayagada district**.
- These paintings are in the form of **exterior murals painted on the mud walls of homes**. White paintings figure over a crimson-maroon background.

#### ➤ Koraput Kala Jeera Rice:

- The black-coloured rice variety, also known as the '**Prince of Rice**', is famous for its aroma, taste, texture and nutritional value.
- Tribal farmers of the Koraput region have preserved the rice variety for around 1,000 years.

#### ➤ Similipal Kai Chutney:

- The chutney made with **red weaver ants** is a **traditional delicacy** of the tribals in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district. These ants are found in the forests of Mayurbhanj, including in the Similipal forests.

Note:

- **Nayagarh Kanteimundi Brinjal:**
  - This Brinjal is **known for its prickly thorns on the stems** and the whole plant. The plants are resistant to major insects and can be grown with minimal pesticide.
- **Odisha Khajuri Guda:**
  - Odisha's "**Khajuri Guda**" or **jaggery** is a natural sweetener extracted from date palm trees and has its origin in the Gajapati district.

- **Dhenkanal Magji:**
  - It is a **type of sweet made from cheese** from buffalo milk, with distinct characteristics in terms of appearance, taste, flavour, shape, and size.

### **What are the other Products Which Received GI Tag?**

State	Product Name	Brief Explanation
Arunachal Pradesh	<b>Wancho Wooden Craft</b>	Ethnic wood craft integral to Wancho tribes, used for decoration and gifting, historically used in various aspects of their community life.
	<b>Adi Kekir</b>	Ginger variety from Arunachal Pradesh.
West Bengal	<b>Tangail Saree</b>	Saree style originating from Bengal with distinct weaving patterns.
	<b>Garad Saree</b>	Saree, known for its unique texture and appearance, is a traditional attire from Bengal.
	<b>Korial Saree</b>	Saree variety is recognized for its weaving style and traditional significance in Bengal.
	<b>Kalo Nunia Rice</b>	Rice variety from West Bengal.
	<b>Sundarban Honey</b>	Honey sourced from the Sundarbans area of West Bengal.
Gujarat	<b>Kachchhi Kharek</b>	Product of date palm harvested at Khalal (fresh stage), which are bold, crisp and sweet.
Jammu Kashmir	<b>Ramban Anardana</b>	Ramban Anardana, locally referred to as Dhruni, is an important fruit tree growing wild in hilly tracts and forests of J&K.

### **What is a Geographical Indication (GI) tag Tag?**

- **About:**
  - A GI tag is a **name or sign used on certain products** that correspond to a specific geographical location or origin.
  - The GI tag ensures that only the **authorised users or those residing in the geographical territory** are allowed to use the popular product name.
    - It also protects the product from being copied or imitated by others.
- A registered GI is **valid for 10 years**.
- GI registration is overseen by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade** under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Legal Framework and Obligations:**
  - The **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** seeks to provide for the

registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.

- It is governed and directed by the **WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)**.

## **Shahi Idgah and Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple Dispute**

### **Why in News?**

The Allahabad High Court recently ruled that a survey will be conducted for the **Shahi Idgah**, a **three-domed mosque** in **Mathura**.

- It is seeking appointment of a **court commission** to inspect the **Shahi Idgah mosque** that stands adjacent to the **Krishna Janmabhoomi temple** in **Mathura**.

Note:

### What is the Places of Worship Act, 1991?

#### ➤ About:

- It was enacted to **freeze the status of religious places of worship** as they existed on **August 15, 1947**, and prohibits the conversion of any place of worship and ensures the maintenance of their religious character.

#### ➤ Major Provisions of the Act:

- **Prohibition of Conversion (Section 3):**
  - Prevents the conversion of a place of worship, whether in full or part, from one religious denomination to another or within the same denomination.
- **Maintenance of Religious Character (Section 4(1)):**
  - Ensures that the religious identity of a place of worship remains the same as it was on **August 15, 1947**.
  - The **Allahabad High Court's** recent stance in the **Gyanvapi case** suggests that the **Places of Worship Act, 1991** does not clarify “religious character of any place of worship” and can only be determined in a trial, based on documentary and oral evidence, on a case-to-case basis.
- **Abatement of Pending Cases (Section 4(2)):**
  - Declares that any ongoing legal proceedings concerning the conversion of a place of worship's religious character before **August 15, 1947**, will be terminated, and no new cases can be initiated.
- **Exceptions to the Act (Section 5):**
  - The Act does not apply to **ancient and historical monuments**, archaeological sites, and remains covered by the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**.
  - It also excludes cases that have already been settled or resolved and disputes that have been resolved by mutual agreement or conversions that occurred before the Act came into effect.
  - The Act does not extend to the specific place of worship known as Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, including any legal proceedings associated with it.
- **Penalties (Section 6):**
  - Specifies penalties, including a maximum imprisonment term of three years and fines, for violating the Act.

## Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023

### Why in News?

Recently, the Sahitya Akademi announced the **Sahitya Akademi Award 2023** in 24 languages.

- Nine books of **poetry, six novels, five short story collections**, three essays and one literary study have **won the Sahitya Akademi Awards this year**.
- The award, in the form of a casket containing an engraved copper-plaque, a shawl, and RS 1,00,000, will be presented to the awardees.

### What is the Sahitya Akademi Award?

#### ➤ About:

- Sahitya Akademi award established in **1954**, is a **literary honour** that is conferred annually by Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of letters.
- Akademi gives 24 awards annually to **literary works in the languages it has recognized** and an equal number of awards to literary translations from and into the languages of India.



- Besides the **22 languages enumerated in the Constitution of India**, the Sahitya Akademi has recognised **English** and **Rajasthani** as languages in which its programme may be implemented.
- The Sahitya Akademi award is the second-highest literary honour by the Government of India, **after the Jnanpith award**.

Note:

- **Criteria for Choosing Awardee:**
  - The author must be of **Indian Nationality**.
  - Book/work eligible for the award must be an outstanding contribution to the language and literature to which it belongs.
  - When equal merit for books of **two or more are found, certain criteria like total literary contribution** and standing of authors shall be taken into consideration for declaring the award.
- **Other Sahitya Akademi Awards:**
  - Sahitya Akademi **Bal Sahitya Puraskar is given to an author** based on his/her total contribution to children literature and relates to books first published during the five years immediately preceding the year of Award.
  - Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar **relates to books published by an author of the age of 35 and below**.

## Bihar's Punaura Dham project

### *Why in News?*

The Bihar state government recently approved a project to develop **Punaura Dham, a temple complex in Sitamarhi district**, as a major tourist attraction.

- Punaura Dham is believed to be the birthplace of Goddess **Sita**, wife of Lord Rama and a revered figure in **Hinduism**.
- The initiative aims to promote the culture and heritage of **Mithila**, the region where Sita was born and raised.

### *Note:*

- According to the **Valmiki Ramayana**, Sita emerged from a furrow when **King Janaka**, the ruler of Mithila, was ploughing the land.
  - He adopted her as his daughter and named her Sita, which means "furrow" in Sanskrit. He also gave her the name Janaki, meaning "daughter of Janaka".

### *What are the Key Cultural Aspects of Mithila?*

- **Historical Significance:**
  - Mithila has a rich and ancient history, dating back to the **Vedic period (1500-500 BCE)** when it was one of the **16 Mahajanapadas of India**.

- Mithila, also known as **Tirhut or Tirabhukti**, is a historically and culturally significant region encompassing Darbhanga, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, Supaul, Saharsa, Madhepura, and adjacent areas of Bihar and Nepal.

- It is bounded by the **Himalayas in the north**, the **Ganges in the south**, the **Gandaki River in the west**, and the **Mahananda River in the east**.

- It is also known as **Mahla** and mentioned in revenue records of the United Provinces of Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa.

- It was ruled by the **Videha Janak dynasty**.

### ➤ **Language and Literature:**

- The main language of **Mithila is Maithili** which belongs to the Indo-Aryan family.

- Maithili has a rich literary tradition, the **poet Vidyapati(1352–1448 AD)**, wrote famous songs of love and devotion in this language.

### ○ **Cultural Heritage:**

- Mithila is famous for its unique style of painting, known as **Madhubani or Mithila painting**, which is done using bright earthy natural colours and geometric patterns.

- The paintings depict scenes from Hindu mythology, especially the Ramayana, as well as flora, fauna, and social events.

### ➤ **GI Tag:**

- **Mithila Makhana or Makhana (botanical name: Euryale ferox Salisb.)** is a special variety of aquatic fox nut cultivated in Mithila region of Bihar and Nepal. It is also recognised with the **GI (geographical indication) tag**.

## UNESCO Recognition to Gujarat's Garba Dance

### *Why in News?*

Recently, the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**, during its 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Intergovernmental Committee in Botswana, officially added **Gujarat's iconic Garba dance** to its esteemed **Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage(ICH) of Humanity**.

- The Garba dance form is the **15<sup>th</sup> cultural item from India to make it to the UNESCO list**. **Kolkata's Durga Puja** was the last one added in 2021.

Note:

### What is the Garba Dance?

- Garba is a form of **Gujarati folk dance** that is performed during the **nine-day Hindu festival of Navratri**, which celebrates the victory of good over evil.
  - The name Garba comes from the **Sanskrit word for womb**, implying life and creation.
- Garba dances celebrate **fertility, honor womanhood, and pay respect to any of an array of mother goddesses**.
  - The dance also customarily marks a girl's first menstrual cycle and, later, her imminent marriage.
- The dance is performed around a **centrally lit lamp or a picture or statue of the Goddess Shakti**, who represents the feminine energy of the universe.
- Garba is accompanied by rhythmic music, singing, and clapping. The dance can be performed by anyone, regardless of age, gender, or social status.
- Modern Garba is heavily influenced by **Dandiya Raas**, a dance traditionally performed by men. The merger of these two dances has formed the high-energy Garba dance that is seen today.
- Garba fosters **social equality by diluting socio-economic, gender, and rigid sect structures**.
  - It continues to be inclusive and participative by diverse and marginalized communities, strengthening community bonds.



### What is UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)?

- **About:**
  - UNESCO ICH is a term that refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, and cultural spaces that are recognized as part of the cultural heritage of a community, group, or individual.
  - UNESCO defines ICH as “the mainspring of humanity’s cultural diversity and its maintenance a guarantee for continuing creativity.”

- In 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the **Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)**, signifying a commitment to protect, promote, and transmit the diverse expressions of human culture.
- The convention establishes two crucial lists for ICH.
  - **Representative List:** Showcasing the global diversity of ICH, this list raises awareness of its significance and importance.
  - **Urgent Safeguarding List:** Identifying threatened ICH, this list calls for immediate measures to ensure its survival.
- **Examples of ICH:**
  - Languages, oral traditions, literature, and poetry.
  - Performing arts, such as music, dance, and theatre.
  - Social practices, rituals, and festive events.
  - Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe.
  - Traditional craftsmanship, such as pottery, weaving, and metalwork.

## Parthenon Sculpture

### Why in News?

Greece and the UK had a diplomatic dispute regarding the Parthenon Sculptures at the British Museum **when Athens accused London of avoiding discussion on the contested sculptures, also known as the Elgin Marbles.**

- Despite **Greece’s repeated requests** for their permanent return, Britain and the British Museum have consistently refused.

### What are the Parthenon Sculptures?

- **About**
  - The Parthenon Sculptures housed at the British Museum are a **collection of over 30 ancient stone sculptures from Greece**, dating back more than 2,000 years.
  - Originally adorning the walls and grounds of the Parthenon temple on the Acropolis hill in Athens, these artifacts are **significant remnants of Athens’ Golden Age**, with the temple’s construction completed in 432 BC.
  - Dedicated to the **goddess Athena**, the Parthenon is a symbol of cultural and historical importance.

Note:

- **Artistic Depictions and Cultural Significance:**
  - Among the sculptures, a notable piece **spanning 75 meters** portrays a procession celebrating the **birthday of Athena**. Additionally, other sculptures **within the collection depict various gods, heroes, and mythical creatures**.
  - The intricate craftsmanship and historical context make these sculptures not only artistic treasures but **also integral pieces of Greece's cultural heritage**.
- **Arrival to Britain:**
  - They were removed from the Parthenon in the early 19th century by **Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin** and then-British ambassador to the **Ottoman Empire**. The marbles were taken to Britain and purchased by the British.

## Motorable Road to Amarnath Cave Shrine

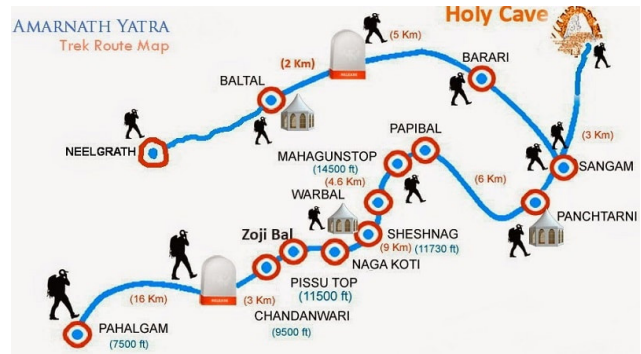
### Why in News?

The **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** has completed the construction of a motorable road that connects the **Amarnath cave shrine** in Kashmir's Lidder Valley with the **Baltal base camp**, making the pilgrimage more accessible and comfortable for the devotees.

- This milestone resulted from the successful upgrade of the **Baltal road**, a feat accomplished through the continuous efforts of **Project Beacon**.

### Note:

- Project Beacon is the **BRO's oldest undertaking**, was raised on May 18, 1960, with its **headquarters at Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir**.
  - Beacon currently takes care of the **road infrastructure development and maintenance** in important areas of Kashmir.
- **Traditional Access Routes:**
  - Pilgrims historically approached the shrine via two routes **Pahalgam and Sonamarg both located in the Lidder Valley**, each presenting its own set of challenges through demanding terrains.
  - Pilgrims also had the option to use chopper services from Baltal to Panchtarni, located 6 km away from the shrine. However, **ecological concerns** led to the **discontinuation of services** directly to the shrine.



## Kozhikode and Gwalior in UNESCO Creative Cities Network

### Why in News?

Recently, the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** announced the addition of 55 new cities to its **Creative Cities Network (UCCN)**. Among the new entrants, two Indian cities made their mark: Kozhikode in Kerala as the 'City of Literature' and Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh as the 'City of Music'.

### Note:

- Other Indian cities in the UCCN include Jaipur: Crafts and Folk Arts (2015), Varanasi: Creative City of Music (2015), Chennai: Creative City of Music (2017), Mumbai: Film (2019), Hyderabad: Gastronomy (2019), and Srinagar: Crafts and Folk Art (2021).



Note:



### What is the Significance of Kozhikode and Gwalior?

- **Kozhikode as City of Literature:**
  - Kozhikode is the **first city in India to receive** the prestigious title of '**City of Literature**' by UNESCO.
  - The city has a long history of hosting various literary events, such as the **Kerala Literature Festival**, which is one of the largest literary gatherings in Asia.
    - This acknowledgement reinforces the city's role as a hub for intellectual exchange and literary discussions.
    - Kozhikode carried the distinction of being home to over 500 libraries.
  - The city is also home to many renowned writers, including **S. K. Pottekkatt (the most celebrated writer of the city)**, Thikkodiyan and P. Valsala Sanjayan, along with poets, scholars, and publishers who have contributed to the diversity and vibrancy of Malayalam literature and culture.
- **Gwalior as the City of Music:**
  - Gwalior is the second city in India to be designated as the 'City of Music' by UNESCO, after Varanasi in 2015.
  - The city is widely regarded as the birthplace of **Tansen**, one of the greatest musicians and composers in Indian history, who was **also one of the 'Navratnas' (nine jewels) in the court of Emperor Akbar**.
  - The city is also the origin of the **Gwalior Gharana**, the oldest and most influential school of Hindustani classical music.
  - The city hosts one of the biggest annual music festivals in India, the **Tansen Sangeet Samaroh**, which attracts thousands of music lovers and artists from across the country and abroad.

### UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- It was **created in 2004**.
- It **aims** to "promote cooperation among cities which recognize creativity as a strategic factor in their urban development".
  - **Sustainable Development Goal 11** aims for Sustainable Cities and Communities.
- The **network covers seven creative fields**: crafts and folk arts, media arts, film, design, gastronomy, literature and music'

## Puri Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar

### Why in News?

Recently, the demand to open the **Ratna Bhandar (treasure room)** of the **Jagannath Temple** is growing louder again. The treasure room at the temple has not been unlocked for three decades.

### What is Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar?

- **About:**
  - The precious ornaments of sibling deities, **Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra**, given by devotees and erstwhile kings over centuries, are stored in the Ratna Bhandar of the **12<sup>th</sup> century shrine**.
  - The Ratna Bhandar consists of two chambers: the **Bhitar Bhandar (inner chamber) and the Bahara Bhandar (outer chamber)**.
    - While the outer chamber is opened regularly to fetch ornaments for the deities during important rituals and festivals, the inner chamber has not been opened in the past **38 years**.

### Jagannath Temple

- The **Jagannath temple** located in **Puri, Odisha** is a sacred temple devoted to **Lord Jagannath** along with his brother **Lord Balabhadra** and sister **Devi Subhadra**.
  - It was constructed by a famous king of Ganga Dynasty **Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva** dating back to **12<sup>th</sup> century**.
  - It is known as the "**White Pagoda**" and one of the **four pilgrimage sites of Char Dham Pilgrimage**.
- It is an outstanding example of **Kalinga architecture**, featuring distinctive curvilinear towers, intricate carvings, and ornate sculptures.
  - It is enclosed by a **high wall with four gates**, each facing a cardinal direction.
- It is also called as '**Yamanika Tirtha**' where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the **power of 'Yama', the god of death**, has been nullified in Puri due to the presence of Lord Jagannath.
- **Associated Major Festivals**: Snana Yatra, Netrotsava, **Rath Yatra**, Sayan Ekadasi.

Note:



## Odhuvans in Tamil Nadu

### Why in News?

Recently, Tamil Nadu government handed over appointment orders to **15 Odhuvans** (among them five are women), who were assigned to **Shaivite temples** in the Chennai region as they **serve the deities by singing the hymns and praise**.

### Who are Odhuvans in Tamil Nadu?

#### ➤ About:

- Odhuvans sing devotional hymns in Tamil Nadu's Hindu temples but are **not priests**. They are in the service of Lord Shiva by singing his **praise from Thirumurai in Saivite temples**. They sing devotional hymns **but do not enter the sanctum sanctorum**.

#### ➤ Origin of Odhuvans:

- The tradition of Odhuvans can be traced back to ancient times, **with its roots firmly embedded in the Bhakti movement**, which flourished **between the 6th and 9th centuries in Tamil Nadu**.
- During this period, **several saint-poets known as Alvars and Nayanars** composed devotional hymns in **praise of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva, respectively**. The Odhuvans emerged as **custodians of this rich musical and devotional heritage**.

### Alvars and Nayanars: The Saints of Tamil Bhakti Tradition

#### ➤ Alvars:

- **Devotion to Lord Vishnu:** The Alvars were a group of **twelve Vaishnava (devotees of Lord Vishnu) saint-poets**. Their compositions primarily centered on their deep devotion to Lord Vishnu and emphasized the **concept of surrender (prapatti) to attain salvation**.

- **Poetic Works:** The Alvars' devotional hymns and poems were collected in the **Naalayira Divya Prabandham**, a significant Vaishnavite scripture. These hymns were composed in the Tamil language and celebrated the divine qualities and forms of Lord Vishnu.

#### ➤ Nayanars:

- **Devotion to Lord Shiva:** The Nayanars were a group of **sixty-three Shaiva (devotees of Lord Shiva) saint-poets**. They were deeply devoted to Lord Shiva and composed hymns and poems in praise of him, emphasizing the path of **bhakti (devotion) and love for the divine**.
- **Poetic Works:** The Nayanars' hymns and poems were collected in the **Thirumurai, a corpus of Shaivite scriptures**. These compositions, written in Tamil, celebrated the various manifestations and attributes of Lord Shiva.

## Shri Ramalinga Swamy

### Why in News?

India celebrated the **200th birth anniversary of Shri Ramalinga Swamy**, also known as **Vallalar**, on 5th October, 2023.

### What are the Key Contributions of Shri Ramalinga Swamy?



#### ➤ About:

- Shri Ramalinga Swamy was a prominent Tamil poet in the **19th century** and a member of the **"gnana siddhars" lineage**.

Note:

- He was born in the village of **Marudhur** in **Tamil Nadu**.

#### ➤ Vision of Social Reforms:

- Vallalar's vision transcends **religious, caste, and creed barriers**, recognizing divinity in every atom of the universe.
- Vallalar was strongly against the **caste system** and initiated the '**Samarasa Vedha Sanmarga Sangam**' in **1865**, later renamed '**Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Sathya Sangam**.'
- He established '**The Sathya Dharma Salai**,' a free food facility in Vadalur, Tamil Nadu in 1867, serving all people without caste distinctions.
- In January, 1872, Vallalar opened the '**Sathya Gnana Sabha**' (Hall of True Knowledge) in Vadalur.

#### ➤ Philosophical Beliefs and Teachings:

- One of Vallalar's primary teachings was "**Service to Living Beings is the path of Liberation/Moksha.**"
- According to Suddha Sanmarga, the prime aspects of human life should be **love, connected with charity and divine practice**, leading to pure knowledge.
- Vallalar believed that the intelligence possessed by humans is **illusory (Maya)** intelligence and not accurate or final.
  - He emphasized "**Jeeva Karuniam**" (**Compassion for living beings**) as the path of final intelligence.
- He forbade killing animals for the sake of food and advocated **feeding the poor as the highest form of worship**.
- He also believed that God in the form of Grace is the **personification of Mercy and Knowledge**.
  - And, **Mercy is a path to God**.

## Allah Baksh and Mewari Style Painting

### Why in News?

Allah Baksh, a Mewari miniature painter late 17<sup>th</sup> century, portrayed the Interpretation of Mahabharata in his Painting and is known for his intricate and delightful representation.

### Who was Allah Baksh?

#### ➤ About:

- Allah Baksh was a **court painter employed by Maharaja Jai Singh of Udaipur** during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

#### ➤ Paintings and Portrayal:

- Each painting by Allah Baksh **meticulously portrays** the details of characters' costumes, the flora and fauna in the background, and the depiction of magical and mystical events.
- These miniatures encapsulate a delightful representation of the **Mahabharata, showcasing a dialogue between the verbal** and visual imaginations of the poet and the painter.



### What is Mewari Style Miniature Painting?

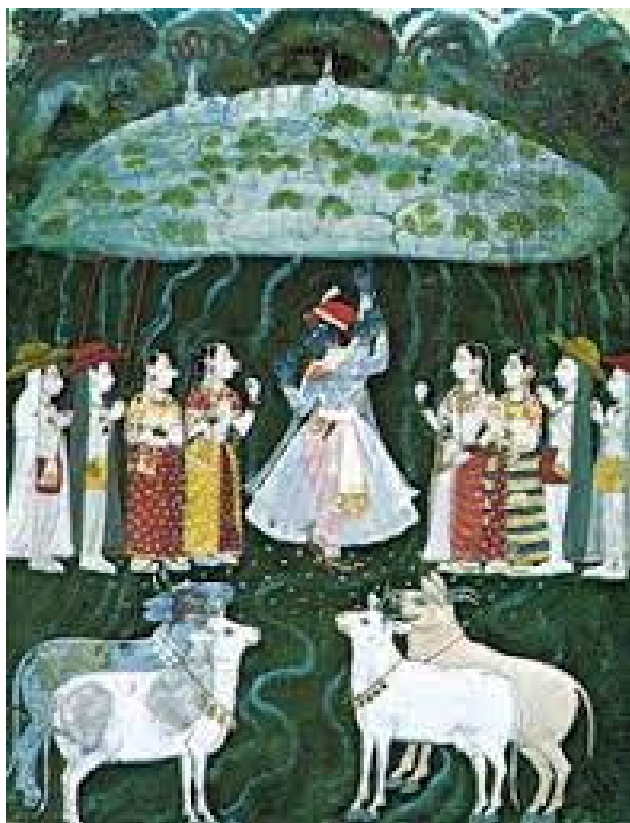
#### ➤ About:

- Mewār painting, one of the most important schools of Indian miniature painting of the **17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries**. It is a school in the **Rājasthanī style** and was developed in the **Hindu principality of Mewār (in Rājasthān state)**.
- It is a highly **refined and intricate form** of painting characterized by its attention to detail, vibrant colors, and meticulous craftsmanship.
- The works of the school are characterized by simple bright color and direct emotional appeal.
  - The comparatively large number of paintings to which dates and places of origin can be ascribed **make possible a more comprehensive picture of the development of painting** in Mewār than in any other Rājasthanī school.
- **Famous Painter:** Sahibdin (painted the Ragamala in 1628).

Note:



drishti



### What is Miniature Painting?

#### ➤ About:

- Miniature paintings are **colorful handmade paintings very small in size**. One of the outstanding features of these paintings is the intricate brushwork which contributes to their unique identity.
- The colors used in the paintings are derived from various natural sources like **vegetables, indigo, precious stones, gold and silver**.
- They were often painted for either books or albums, on perishable material including paper, palm leaves and cloth.
  - The Palas of Bengal are **considered the pioneers of miniature painting in India**.
  - The tradition of miniature paintings was further taken forward by the artists of various Rajasthani schools of painting, including the Kishangarh, Bundi Jaipur, Mewar and Marwar.

#### ➤ Schools of Miniature Painting:

- **Pala School:** The earliest Indian miniature paintings are related to the Pala School dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

- This school of painting emphasized on the symbolic use of colors and the **themes were often taken from the Buddhist tantric rituals**.
- **Jain School:** The Jain School of painting gained prominence in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D when religious texts like '**Kalpa Sutra**' and '**Kalkacharya Katha**' were portrayed in the form of miniature paintings.
- **Mughal School:** The amalgamation of Indian paintings and Persian miniature paintings gave rise to the Mughal School of miniature painting.
  - Interestingly, Persian miniature paintings were largely influenced by Chinese paintings.
- **Rajasthani School:** The decline of the Mughal miniature paintings resulted in the rise of the Rajasthani School. Rajasthani School of painting can be further divided into **various schools** depending on the region they were created in.
  - The Mewar School, Marwar School, Hadoti School, Dhundar School, Kangra and Kullu Schools of art are all part of Rajasthani School of painting.
- **Pahari School:** Pahari School of miniature painting emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. These paintings originated in the kingdoms of North India, in the Himalayan region.
- **Deccan School:** The Deccan School of miniature painting flourished in places like Ahmednagar, Golconda, Tanjore, Hyderabad and Bijapur from 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D.
  - The Deccan School of miniature painting was largely influenced by the rich traditions of the Deccan and the religious beliefs of Turkey, Persia and Iran.

## Toto Language

### Why in News?

The **Toto language**, spoken by only 1,600 people in West Bengal, is on the brink of extinction.

- However, a **trilingual dictionary (Toto-Bengali-English)** called "**Toto Shabda Sangraha**" is set to be released in Kolkata on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023, to help preserve the toto language.

### What is the Toto Language?

- The Toto language is a **Sino-Tibetan language** spoken by the **Toto tribal people** in parts of West Bengal bordering Bhutan.

Note:

- **The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** lists it as a **critically endangered** language.
- The Toto language is **primarily spoken orally** and even though prominent community member **Padma Shri-decorated Dhaniram Toto** developed a script as recently as in **2015**, most people either **write it in Bengali script** or write in Bengali language.

### Toto People

- The Toto is a primitive and isolated tribal group residing only in a small enclave called Totopara in the Jalpaiguri of West Bengal, India.
- The total population of Totos is **less than 2000 according to the 2001 census**, all living in Totopara.
- The Totos are considered **Mongoloid people**.
- They are generally **endogamous and marry within their own tribe**.
- The Toto family is **patrilocal** (social system in which a **married couple resides with the husband's parents**) in nature and dominated by **nuclear type**. However, joint families are not rare. **Monogamy** is a common form of marriage among the Toto but **polygamy is not prohibited**. There is **no custom of divorce among the Totos**.

## Statue of Adi Shankaracharya

### Why in News?

Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh (M.P) unveiled the 108 feet high '**Statue of Oneness**' of **Adi Shankaracharya** on **Mandhata mountain** at Omkareshwar in Khandwa district, M.P and laid the foundation stone of Advaita Lok.

### Why is the Mandhata Considered Significant?

- The Mandhata island, **nestled on the Narmada River**, is home to **two of the 12 Jyotirlingas** – Omkareshwara (located on the south side of the island) and Amareshwara.
- The island is dotted with **Shaivite, Vaisnavite, and Jain temples** dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- The name '**Omkareshwar**' is **derived from the shape of the island**, which resembles the sacred syllable 'Om', and its name means 'the Lord of Omkara'.



### Who was Adi Shankaracharya?

#### About:

- Known as **Adi Shankara (788–820 CE)**, born at **Kaladi near Kochi, Kerala**.
  - Took Samadhi at the age of 33, at **Kedar tirth**.
- He was a **devotee of Shiva**.
- He is said to have arrived at Omkareshwar as a young monk, where he encountered his **Guru Govind Bhagwadpad**.
- Resided in the sacred city for four years, and received his education .
- He departed Omkareshwar at the age of 12 and embarked on a journey across the nation, **disseminating the teachings of Advaita Vedanta philosophy** and elucidating its principles to the people.
- Propounded the **Doctrine of Advaita (Monism)** and wrote many commentaries on the **Vedic canon** (Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Bhagavad Gita) in Sanskrit.
- He was **opposed to Buddhist philosophers**.
- **Major Work:**
  - Brahmasutrabhasya (Bhashya or commentary on the Brahma Sutra).
  - Bhajagovinda Stotra.
  - Nirvana Shatakam.
  - Prakaran Grantha.

Note:

### What is Advaita Vedanta ?

- It articulates a philosophical position of **radical nondualism**, a revisionary worldview which it derives from the ancient Upanishadic texts.
- According to Advaita Vedantins, the Upanishads reveal a **fundamental principle of nonduality termed 'brahman', which is the reality of all things.**
- Advaitins understand brahman as transcending individuality and empirical plurality.
- They seek to **establish that the essential core of one's self (atman) is brahman.**
- The fundamental thrust of Advaita Vedanta is that the atman is pure non-intentional consciousness.
- It is **one without a second, nondual, infinite existence, and numerically identical with brahman.**

### Other Famous Statue

- Previously, Prime Minister (PM) of India inaugurated the **Statue of Equality** on the outskirts of Hyderabad to commemorate the **11th-century Bhakti saint Sri Ramanujacharya** on his **1,000th birth anniversary.**
- In 2018, PM inaugurated the **Statue of Unity** in Gujarat's Kevadia in memory of former deputy Prime Minister **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.**

## Hoysala Temples Now India's 42<sup>nd</sup> World Heritage Site

### Why in News?

The Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala, the famed Hoysala temples of Belur, Halebid and Somanathapur in Karnataka have been added to the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage list.** This inclusion marks the **42nd UNESCO World Heritage Site in India**

- Recently, **Santiniketan**, which is a town located in the **Birbhum district of West Bengal**, was also included in UNESCO's World Heritage List.

### Note:

- The 'Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala' have been on UNESCO's **Tentative list since April 15, 2014.** The other heritage sites in Karnataka which got into the UNESCO list are **Hampi (1986)** and **Pattadakal (1987).**

### What are the Key Facts About the Hoysala Temples?

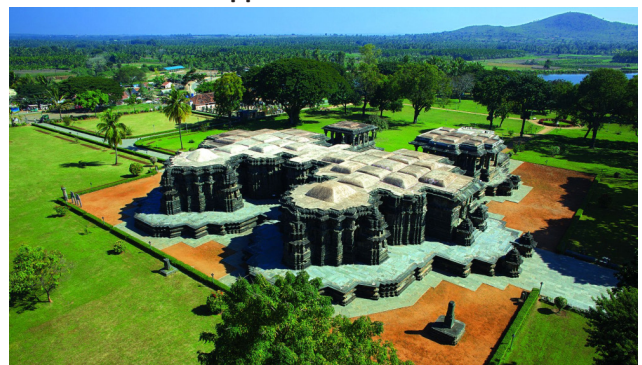
#### ➤ Chennakeshava Temple in Belur:

- It was built by **Hoysala King Vishnuvardhana** to commemorate his victory over the **Cholas** in 1116 AD.
  - Beluru (also known earlier as Velapuri, Velur and Belapur in olden times) is situated on the banks of the Yagachi River and was one of the capitals of the Hoysala Empire.
- It is a **star-shaped temple**, dedicated to **Lord Vishnu**, and is the main temple in the temple complex at Belur.



#### ➤ Hoysaleshwara Temple in Halebid:

- This twin-shrined temple is perhaps the **largest Shiva temple built by the Hoysalas.**
- The sculptures depict various aspects of Shiva, as well as scenes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagavata Purana.
- Halebid has a walled complex containing three **Jaina basadi (temples)** of the Hoysala period as well as a stepped well.



#### ➤ Keshava Temple of Somanathapur:

- It is a beautiful Trikuta Temple dedicated to **Lord Krishna in three forms-Janardhana, Keshava and Venugopala.**
  - The main Keshava idol is missing, and the Janardhana and Venugopala idols are damaged.

Note:

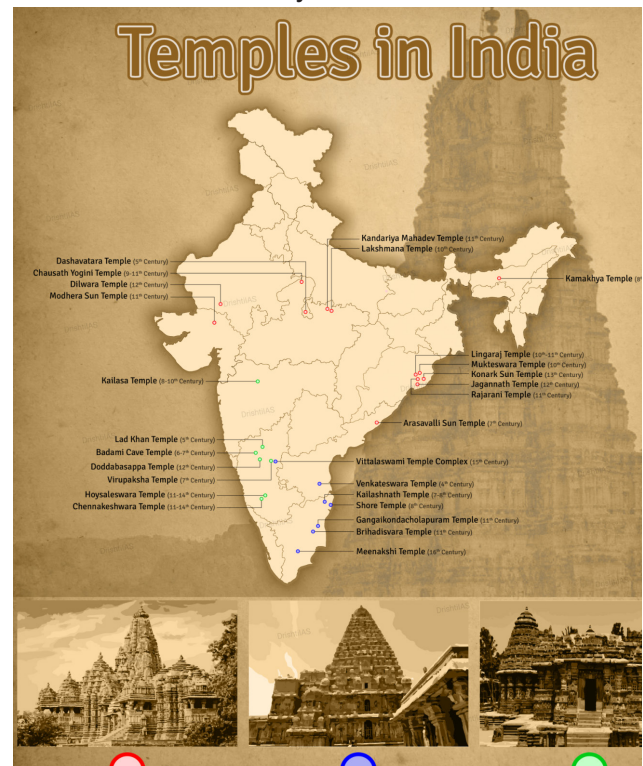


### What are the Key Facts about Hoysala Architecture?

- **About:**
  - The Hoysala Temples were **built during the 12th and 13th centuries CE**, showcasing the unique architectural and artistic brilliance of the Hoysala dynasty.
    - All these three Hoysala temples are protected monuments of the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.
- **Key Elements:**
  - Mantapa
  - Vimana
  - Sculpture
- **Characteristics:**
  - These temples are not just architectural wonders but also repositories of the **cultural and historical heritage of the Hoysala dynasty**.
  - Hoysala temples are sometimes called **hybrid or vesara** as their unique style seems neither completely **dravida nor nagara**, but somewhere in between. They are easily distinguishable from other medieval temples.
    - **Hoysala architecture** is known for its distinctive blend of **Bhumija style prevalent in Central India**, the **Nagara traditions of northern and western India**, and the **Karnataka Dravida modes** favored by the **Kalyani Chalukyas**.
  - Contain **multiple shrines grouped around a central pillared hall** and laid out in the shape of an intricately-designed star.
  - They are made out of **soapstone** which is a relatively soft stone, the artists were able to carve their sculptures intricately. This **can be seen particularly in the jewellery of the gods** that adorn their temple walls.

### Hoysala Dynasty

- **Origin and Rise:**
  - The Hoysalas governed areas spanning **Karnataka and Tamil Nadu** for over three centuries, with **Sala serving as the dynasty's founder**.
  - The first kings came from the hills **northwest of Dorasamudra (present-day Halebid)**, which became their capital in about 1060.
- **Political History:**
  - The Hoysalas were feudatories of the **Chalukyas of Kalyana**, also known as the **Western Chalukya Empire**.
  - The most notable rulers of the **Hoysala dynasty were Vishnuvardhana, Veera Ballala II, and Veera Ballala III**.
    - Vishnuvardhana (also known as Bittideva) was the greatest king of the Hoysala dynasty.
- **Religion and Culture:**
  - The Hoysala dynasty was a tolerant and pluralistic society that patronized various religions, such as **Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism**.
  - King **Vishnuvardhana was initially a Jain but later converted to Vaishnavism under the influence of the saint Ramanuja**.



Note:

## Santiniketan Becomes India's 41<sup>st</sup> World Heritage Site

### Why In News?

- Recently, **Santiniketan**, which is a town located in **Birbhum district of West Bengal**, was included in the **UNESCO's World Heritage List**.
  - The efforts to have **Santiniketan** recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** have been ongoing since **2010**. **Santiniketan** has been recognized by **UNESCO** as India's **41st World Heritage Site**.

### Why is Santiniketan Well Known?

- Historical Significance:** In **1862**, **Rabindranath Tagore's** father, **Debendranath Tagore**, spotted this scenic landscape and decided to establish an **ashram**, building a house called **Santiniketan**, meaning "abode of peace".
- Name Change:** The area, originally called **Bhubadanga**, was renamed **Santiniketan** by **Debendranath Tagore** due to its conducive environment for **meditation**.
- Educational Legacy:** In **1901**, **Rabindranath Tagore** chose a significant portion of land and established a school based on the **Brahmachary Ashram** model. This school later evolved into **Visva Bharati University**.
- UNESCO World Heritage Site:** The **Ministry of Culture** proposed **Santiniketan** for inclusion in the **UNESCO World Heritage List**, emphasizing its importance in **human values, architecture, arts, town planning, and landscape design**.
- Archaeological Preservation:** The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has been involved in the **restoration** of several structures in **Santiniketan**, preserving its **historical and cultural heritage**.

### Who was Rabindranath Tagore?

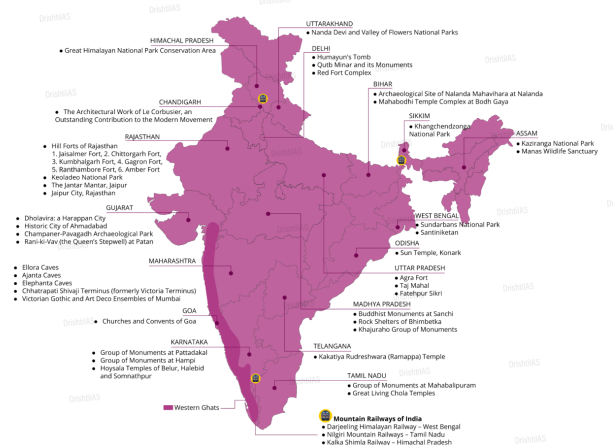
- Early Life:**
  - Rabindranath Tagore** was born on **May 7, 1861**, in **Calcutta, India**, into a prominent **Bengali family**. He was the **youngest of thirteen children**.
  - Tagore** was a **polymath** and **excelled** in various fields. He was not only a **poet** but also a **philosopher, musician, playwright, painter, educator, and social reformer**.

- Nobel Laureate:**
  - In **1913**, **Rabindranath Tagore** became the first Asian to be awarded the **Nobel Prize in Literature** for his collection of poems titled "**Gitanjali**" (**Song Offerings**).
- Knighthood:**
  - Rabindranath Tagore** was awarded with **Knighthood for Services to Literature** by **King George V** in **1915**.
  - Tagore** renounced his **title of Knighthood** after the **1919 Jallianwala Bagh Massacre**.
- Composer of National Anthems:**
  - He wrote the **national anthems of two countries**, "**Jana Gana Mana**" (**the Indian national anthem**) and "**Amar Shonar Bangla**" (**the Bangladesh national anthem**).

### What are UNESCO's World Heritage Sites?

- A **World Heritage Site** is a place that is listed by **UNESCO** for its special **cultural or physical significance**.
- The list of **World Heritage Sites** is maintained by the international '**World Heritage Programme**', administered by the **UNESCO World Heritage Committee**.
- This is embodied in an **international treaty** called the **Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, adopted by **UNESCO** in **1972**.

## UNESCO World Heritage Sites



### FACTS

- Total Number of World Heritage Sites in India: 42
- Total Cultural Heritage Sites: 34
- Total Natural Sites: 7 (Kaziranga National Park, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, Sundarbans National Park, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Keoladeo National Park)
- Mixed Site: 1 (Khajurachongzong National Park)
- World Heritage Sites Listed First: Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves (all in 1983)
- Latest Addition (2023): Hoysala Temples (42<sup>nd</sup> site) and Santiniketan (41<sup>st</sup> site)
- Countries With the Most UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Italy (58), China (56), Germany (51), France (49), Spain (49)
- India is 6<sup>th</sup> in number of World Heritage Sites in the World



Note:



## TRIFED Showcases India's Tribal Craftsmanship at G20 Summit

### Why in News?

The recent **18<sup>th</sup> G20 Summit** witnessed a captivating display of **India's rich tribal heritage and craftsmanship**, curated and presented by the **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)**, Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

### What Artifacts and Products did TRIFED Display at the G20 Summit?

#### ➤ Longpi Pottery:

- Originating from the village of **Longpi in Manipur**, the **Tangkhul Naga tribes** practise this unique pottery style.
- Longpi pottery stands out as it **doesn't rely on the potter's wheel; everything is hand-shaped or moulded**.
- The distinct grey-black cooking pots, sturdy kettles, and charming bowls are Longpi's trademarks, but new design elements are being introduced.



#### ➤ Chhattisgarh Wind Flutes:

- '**Sulur**' bamboo wind flute is a unique musical creation curated by the **Gond Tribe of Bastar in Chhattisgarh**.

- It produces melodies through a simple one-handed twirl and has fish emblems, geometric lines, and triangles etched on its surface.
- The '**Sulur**' serves utilitarian purposes, helping **tribal men ward off animals and guide cattle through jungles**.
- It showcases the Gond Tribe's ingenious craftsmanship, which is a **harmonious blend of artistry and functionality**.

#### ➤ Gond Paintings:

- Gond paintings reflect their **deep connection to nature and tradition**.
- They **start with dots, calculating image volume, which they then connect to form outer shapes filled with vibrant colours**.



- These artworks are deeply influenced by their social environment and they stand as a testament to the tribe's artistic ingenuity.

#### ➤ Gujarat Hangings:

- Curated by the **Bhil & Patelia Tribe in Dahod, Gujarat**, these wall hangings are rooted in ancient Gujarat art.
- Initially, the hangings were **dolls and cradle birds made of cotton cloth and recycled materials**.
  - The hangings now include mirror work, zari, stones, and beads, blending tradition with contemporary fashion.



Note:

➤ **Sheep Wool Stoles:**



- Crafted by the **Bodh, Bhutia, and Gujjar Bakarwal tribes** from Himachal Pradesh/Jammu & Kashmir.
  - They use **pure sheep wool** to make various clothing, including jackets, shawls, and stoles.
  - Originally featuring monochromatic schemes of white, black, and grey, Tribal craftsmanship is undergoing a transformation with dual-coloured designs becoming popular.

➤ **Rajasthan Artistry:**

○ **Mosaic Lamps:**



- Captures the **mosaic art style** and is crafted into lampshades and candle holders. When illuminated, they unleash a kaleidoscope of colours, adding vibrancy to any space.
- **Ambabari Metalwork:**
  - It is curated by the **Meena Tribe** and also embraces enamelling, a meticulous process that elevates metal decoration.
    - Today, it extends beyond gold to metals like silver and copper.



○ **Meenakari Crafts:**

- Meenakari crafts involve decorating metal surfaces with vibrant minerals, a tradition demanding exceptional skill, introduced by the Mughals.
  - This tradition demands exceptional skills as delicate designs are etched onto metal, creating grooves for colours to nestle in.

**Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED):**

- TRIFED came into existence in 1987. It is a national-level apex organisation functioning under the administrative control of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The objective of TRIFED is the **socio-economic development of tribal people** in the country by way of **marketing development of the tribal products** such as metal craft, tribal textiles, pottery, tribal paintings and pottery on which the tribals depend heavily for a major portion of their income.
- TRIFED acts as a **facilitator and service provider for tribes to sell their product**.
- The approach by TRIFED aims to **empower tribal people** with knowledge, tools and a pool of information so that they can undertake their operations in a more systematic and scientific manner.
- It also involves capacity building of the tribal people through sensitization, formation of **Self Help Groups (SHGs)** and imparting training to them for undertaking a particular activity.
- TRIFED has its Head Office located in New Delhi and has a network of 13 Regional Offices located at various places in the country.

Note:

## Indian Gifts to G-20 Leaders Full of Rich Crafts

### Why in News?

The **G20 Summit** 2023 held in Delhi recently served as a platform for world leaders to experience India's rich traditions and cultural diversity through a curated selection of handcrafted gifts.

- These gifts included a **variety of handcrafted items** sourced from different regions of India, showcasing Bharat's cultural and artisanal heritage.

### What are the Gifts Presented to the Leaders?

#### ➤ Sandook:



- All the Gift items were meticulously packaged in a **Sandook (chest)** adorned with **intricate brass detailing**.
- This chest was handcrafted using **Sheesham (Indian rosewood)**, known for its durability and distinctive grain pattern.

#### ➤ Aromatic and Culinary Delights:

- The gift hamper included a pack of **Saffron from Jammu and Kashmir**, renowned as the world's **most expensive spice**, celebrated for its culinary and medicinal properties.

#### ➤ The Champagne Of Teas:

Pekoe Darjeeling and Nilgiri Tea are two illustrious gems from **India's tea tapestry**, epitomizing the delicate art of tea cultivation and infusion.

- **Darjeeling Tea**

is the most valued tea in the world, located on the misty hills of West Bengal at altitudes of 3,000-5,000 feet. The soil's unique character gets reflected in a **highly aromatic and invigorating cup of tea**.



- **Nilgiri Tea** comes from the most spectacular mountain range in south India. Cultivated amidst the mountains' lush terrain at an elevation of 1,000-3,000 ft, **the tea is relatively mild**.

#### ➤ Araku Coffee:

- Araku Coffee is the **world's first terroir-mapped coffee**, grown on organic and sustainable plantations in the **Araku Valley of Andhra Pradesh**.

#### ➤ Traditional Honey from the Sundarbans:

- From the **Sundarbans**, the largest mangrove forest globally, located in the Bay of Bengal, **came a special honey harvested** by traditional honey collectors.
- Besides being 100% natural and pure, Sundarban honey is also **high in flavonoids** (various compounds found naturally in many fruits and vegetables) and provides valuable health benefits.



#### ➤ Perfume from Kannauj:

- The Zighranalttar from Kannauj in Uttar Pradesh **showcases India's centuries-old tradition of crafting exquisite perfumes**, adding a sensory dimension to the gifts.



#### ➤ Exquisite Shawls from Kashmir:

- The gift package also featured a **Kashmiri Pashmina shawl** sourced from **the Changthangi goat**, found only at elevations of 14,000 feet above sea level.
- The wool is collected by combing (and not shearing) the undercoat of this goat.

Note:

- **Khadi Scarves:**
  - The Khadi scarf, personally presented to each leader during their visit to the Rajghat, held immense symbolic value.
  - Khadi, with its origins in India's independence movement and its evolution into a symbol of sustainable **fashion, epitomizes high-quality and eco-conscious clothing.**
- **Commemorative Coins and Stamps:**
  - In July 2023, the Prime Minister of India released **special coins and stamps to commemorate India's G20 Presidency** during the inauguration of Bharat Mandapam.
  - These designs drew inspiration from India's G20 logo and the theme of 'VasudhaivaKutumbakam.'
  - One of the postage stamps, rendered in gold color, took inspiration from the lotus, **India's national flower**, as represented in the G20 Presidency logo.

## Konark Wheel Shines at G-20 Summit Venue

### *Why in News?*

The **18<sup>th</sup> G20 Summit** was held in New Delhi, for the first time on 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> September 2023, under the theme '**One Earth, One Family, One Future**'.

- The venue of the summit was the **Bharat Mandapam Convention Centre in Pragati Maidan, New Delhi**. As part of showcasing India's cultural diversity and heritage, a wall depicting the **mural** of the **historic Konark Wheel of Odisha's Sun Temple** is placed as the backdrop for welcoming world leaders at the summit venue.

### *What are the Key Facts About Konark Sun Temple?*

- **About:**
  - The Konark Sun Temple is a **13th-century CE Sun temple at Konark**, on the coastline in Puri district, Odisha, India.
  - The temple is attributed to **King Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga dynasty about 1250 CE**.
  - Dedicated to the **Hindu Sun God Surya**, the temple complex has the appearance of a **100-foot-high chariot with immense wheels and horses, all carved from stone.**

- The temple is also a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** and a major pilgrimage site for Hindus and is depicted on the reverse side of the Indian currency note of 10 rupees.
- The Sun Temple is the **culmination of Kalinga temple architecture.**
- The temple was also called the "**Black Pagoda**" by European sailors as early as 1676 because it looked like a great tiered tower that appeared black. Similarly, the Jagannath Temple in Puri was called the "**White Pagoda.**"

### ➤ **Key Features:**

- The temple represents a chariot of the **Sun God, with twelve pairs of wheels drawn by seven horses evoking its movement across the heavens.**
  - The wheels have **24 spokes that symbolize the 24 hours in a day**. The wheels also function as **sundials**, as the shadows cast by the spokes indicate the time of the day.
- The temple comprises several distinct and well-organized spatial units.
  - The **vimana (principal sanctuary)** was surmounted by a high tower with a **shikhara (crowning cap) also known as Rekha deul**, which was razed in the 19th century.
  - To the east, the **jahamogana (audience hall or Mandap)** dominates the ruins with its pyramidal mass.
  - Farther to the east, the **natmandir (dance hall)**, today unroofed, rises on a high platform.

## Nataraja Artistry of Lord Shiva

### *Why in News?*

Recently, The **G20 Leaders' Summit** at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, featured a stunning **27-foot Nataraja sculpture**, the **world's tallest representation of Lord Shiva in his dancing form.**

### *What are the Key Highlights of the Nataraja Statue in Bharat Mandapam?*

- This remarkable Nataraja statue, crafted from an **ashtadhatu (eight-metal alloy)** by artisans from Tamil Nadu, weighs **18 tonnes.**

Note:

- The statue is sculpted by the renowned sculptor **Radhakrishnan Sthapaty** of Swami Malai in Tamil Nadu.
- The design of this Nataraja statue draws inspiration from three revered Nataraja idols: the **Thillai Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram**, the **Uma Maheswarar**

**Temple in Konerirajapuram**, and the **Brihadeeswara (Big) Temple**, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, in **Thanjavur**. This offers a deep insight into the **history and religious symbolism of Lord Shiva's dancing form**.

- The Nataraja sculpture at Bharat Mandapam is made using the **lost wax method**.



- Lord Shiva is a complex deity in the Puranic pantheon, embodying **both destructive and ascetic qualities**.
- Nataraja, the 'Lord of Dance,' is celebrated for his invention of 108 diverse dances. The dancing Shiva became associated with both **creation and destruction, embodying the dualities of life**.
- The dance was seen as a cosmic dance, with Shiva as the **cosmic dancer, and the world as the stage**.
- **Iconic Elements of Nataraja**
  - In iconic representations, Nataraja is depicted within a **flaming aureole or halo, symbolizing the circle of the world**.
  - His long, flowing dreadlocks signify the **energy and dynamism of his dance**.
    - Nataraja is typically shown with four arms, each holding symbolic objects that convey deeper meanings.
- **Symbolism in Nataraja's Attributes:**
  - Nataraja holds a **damru (hand drum) in his upper right hand**, which **draws all creatures into his rhythmic motion**, and in his **upper**

**left arm, he wields Agni (fire), symbolizing his power to destroy the universe.**

- Beneath one of Nataraja's feet lies a crushed dwarf-like figure, representing illusion and worldly distractions.
- In ornamentation, one ear of Shiva has a **male earring while the other has a female**.
  - This represents the fusion of male and female and is often referred to as **Ardhanarishwar**.
- A snake is twisted around the arm of Shiva. The snake symbolises the **kundalini power**, which resides in the **human spine in the dormant stage**. **If aroused, one can attain true consciousness.**
- **Nataraja as Protector and Reassurer:**
  - Despite the formidable symbolism associated with Nataraja, he also serves as a protector.
  - The '**abhayamudra**' (**fear-allaying gesture**) made with his **front right hand reassures devotees**, offering protection from fear and doubt.
  - Nataraja's raised feet and his gesture with his front left-hand point to his feet, inviting devotees to seek refuge in him.

Note:



### ○ Nataraja's Smile:

- One of the distinctive features of Nataraja's iconography is his almost always present broad smile.
- The French historian Renee Grousset beautifully described Nataraja's smile as representing both "death and life, both joy and pain."



### What is the Lost Wax Method?

- Sculptors who created the Nataraja statue which is placed at the Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, trace their lineage **34 generations back to the Cholas**.
- The crafting process used is the **traditional 'lost-wax' casting method, indigenous to the Chola era**.
  - The lost-wax method dates back at least 6,000 years, a **copper amulet** crafted using this method at a neolithic site in **Mehrgarh, Balochistan (present day Pakistan) is dated to circa 4,000 BC**.
    - Notably, the **Dancing Girl of Mohenjo Daro was also crafted using this technique**.
- This method involves creating a **detailed wax model, coating it with alluvial soil, heating to burn away the wax, and filling the mold with molten metal**.

- The Cholas excelled in the lost wax method for producing elaborate metallic sculptures.
- This technique was used to create intricate sculptures for millennia.

## Adopt a Heritage 2.0 and e-Permission Portal

### Why in News?

**Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** launched the "Adopt a Heritage 2.0" program to come forward and help in better upkeep and rejuvenation of India's rich cultural heritage, in line with the vision of 'Virasat Bhi, Vikas Bhi'.

- An easy-to-use mobile application called '**Indian Heritage**' has been introduced, alongside the launch of an **e-permission portal**.

### What is the Indian Heritage App and e-Permission Portal?

#### ➤ Indian Heritage App:

- It will showcase the heritage monuments of India.
- The app will feature state-wise details of monuments along with photographs, a list of public amenities available, geo-tagged locations, and feedback mechanism for citizens.

#### ➤ e-Permission Portal:

- An e-permission portal is for obtaining permission for photography, filming, and developmental projects on monuments.
- The portal will fast-track the process of obtaining various permissions and solve operational and logistical bottlenecks.

### What is the Adopt a Heritage 2.0 Programme?

- The programme is a revamped version of the earlier scheme (Adopt a Heritage Scheme) launched in 2017 and clearly defines the amenities sought for different monuments as per the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR), 1958**.
- The stakeholders can apply for adopting a monument or specific amenities at a monument through a dedicated web portal that contains details of monuments sought for adoption.

Note:

- Adopt a Heritage 2.0 programme seeks to **foster collaboration with corporate stakeholders through which they can contribute to the preservation of these monuments** for the next generations.
  - The term of the appointment will be for a period of five years initially, which may be further extended up to five years.

### What is the Adopt a Heritage Scheme?

- **About:**
  - It is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture ASI, and State/ UTs governments.
  - It was launched on **27 September 2017 (World Tourism Day)** by the President of India.
- **Aim:**
  - The Project aims to develop synergy among all partners to effectively promote 'responsible tourism'.
  - It aims to involve public sector companies, private sector companies, and corporate citizens/individuals to take up **the responsibility for making our heritage and tourism more sustainable.**
  - It is to be done through the development, operation, and maintenance of **world-class tourist infrastructure and amenities at ASI/ State heritage sites** and other important tourist sites in India.
- **Monument Mitras:**
  - Agencies/Companies would become '**Monument Mitras**' through the innovative concept of 'Vision Bidding', where the agency with the best vision for the heritage site will be given an opportunity to associate pride with their **CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)** activities.
- **Rationale Behind 'Adopt a Heritage':**
  - The heritage sites are facing common challenges primarily related to the operations and maintenance of the various infrastructural as well as service assets.
  - There is a need to develop a robust mechanism for the provision of basic amenities on an immediate basis and advanced amenities on a long-term basis.

### What are the Previous Attempts for Corporate Involvement in Heritage Management?

- **National Culture Fund:** The government of India in 1996 formed a National Culture Fund. Since then, 34 projects have been completed under it through public-private partnerships.

- **Campaign Clean India:** 'Campaign Clean India,' in which the government had identified 120 monuments/ destinations.
  - Under this scheme, the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) adopted Qutab Minar as a pilot project in 2012, while ONGC adopted six monuments — Ellora Caves, Elephanta Caves, Golkonda Fort, Mamallapuram, Red Fort, and Taj Mahal — as part of its CSR.

### Note:

**Experience of Italy:** Italy has the largest number of **UNESCO** Heritage Sites in the world. The cash-strapped government has been successfully collaborating with corporations since 2014 for heritage maintenance after shunning them for decades.

## World Sanskrit Day 2023

### Why in News?

In 2023, the celebration of **World Sanskrit Day** takes place on **31<sup>st</sup> August**.

### What are the Important Facts about World Sanskrit Day?

- **History:**
  - The **first World Sanskrit Day was celebrated in 1969.**
  - World Sanskrit Day or Vishwa Sanskrit Diwas is **celebrated on Purnima Tithi (Full moon)** of **Shravana** month every year.
  - It serves as a **tribute to the birth anniversary of Panini**, a distinguished Sanskrit scholar and grammarian.
- **Importance:**
  - This day is **celebrated to show gratitude and respect towards the Sanskrit language.**

### What are Some of the Important Facts about the Sanskrit Language?

- It is an **Indo-Aryan language** and is **considered to be one of the oldest languages** and is known as the **mother of most languages of India.**
- It is **believed to have originated in India around 3500 years ago** and is often **referred to as Dev Vani** (the language of the deities).

Note:

- It is **divided into two parts which are Vedic and classical.**
  - Vedic Sanskrit is the older and more archaic form of Sanskrit, which is attested in the **Rig Veda, the Upanishads, and the Puranas.**
  - Classical Sanskrit is the **later and more standardised form of Sanskrit**, which is based on the grammar of Panini and **used in literature, philosophy, science, and art.**

#### Note:

- Sanskrit is among the 22 official languages included in the **Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution.**
- It is also included among **6 Classical languages** besides Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia.
- In 2010, **Sanskrit was declared the second official language of Uttarakhand.**
- In **Mattur village of Karnataka everyone speaks in the Sanskrit language.**

## National Maritime Heritage Complex

### Why in News?

Recently, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, reviewed the project process of **National Maritime Heritage Complex** (NMHC), Lothal in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

- NMHC complex will have **Asia's Biggest Under Water Marine Museum** and India's Grandest Naval Museum.

### What is the National Maritime Heritage Complex?

- **About:**
  - The NMHC is being constructed at the historic **Indus Valley civilization** region of **Lothal**, Gujarat, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways.
  - Its primary objective is to **showcase the maritime heritage** of India from **ancient to modern times**, utilizing an edutainment approach and incorporating the latest technology.
- **Significance:**
  - The NMHC is set to become the **world's largest maritime museum complex** and an international tourist destination.

- It will play a crucial role in educating visitors about India's rich maritime history and elevate India's image in the global maritime sector.
- The project is part of the **Sagarmala Programme** and is being developed with the participation of public and private institutes, organizations, and **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** initiatives. **Major ports in India** have also contributed funds to support the project.

#### Unique Features of NMHC:

- Includes **Lothal Mini Recreation; Four theme parks:** Memorial, Maritime and Navy, Climate, and Adventure and Amusement; Coastal States Pavilion.

### What is Lothal?

#### About:

- One of the southernmost sites of the IVC in Gujarat's Bhāl region. Believed to have been built around 2,200 BC.
- It flourished as a trade center around 2,200 BC, with trade connections reaching West Asia and Africa.
- Known for its **trade of beads, gems, and ornaments.**
- Meaning of "Lothal" in Gujarati is "the mound of the dead."
- The excavated site of Lothal is the only port town of the Indus Valley Civilization.

#### Nomination for UNESCO World Heritage Site:

- Lothal was nominated in April 2014 for inclusion on the **UNESCO World Heritage List.**
- Its application is pending on the tentative list of UNESCO.



Note:



## Lambani Art

### Why in News?

The third [G20 Culture Working Group \(CWG\)](#) meeting in Hampi, Karnataka witnessed a historic moment as a [Guinness World Record](#) was established for the 'largest display of Lambani items' in the event, titled 'Threads of Unity'.

- This achievement showcased the collective efforts of over **450 Lambani women artisans** and cultural practitioners from the nomadic Lambani community in Karnataka.
- By supporting Lambani artisans, this initiative contributes to the economic independence of women. It aligns with the third priority of the CWG, 'Promotion of Cultural and Creative Industries and Creative Economy.'

### What is Lambani Art?

- Lambani art is a form of **textile embellishment** practiced by the **Lambani or Banjara community**, a nomadic group inhabiting several states of India, especially Karnataka.
- It is characterised by **colourful threads, mirror work, and a rich array of stitch patterns** on loosely woven fabric.
  - It involves skillfully stitching together small pieces of discarded fabric to create a beautiful patchwork.
- It is recognised as a sustainable practice that works on the principle of **recycle and reuse**.
- The Lambani embroidery techniques and aesthetics **bear similarities with textile traditions in Eastern Europe, West Asia, and Central Asia**, showcasing the interconnectedness of global textile arts
  - **Sandur Lambani embroidery**, a specific type of Lambani art from the Sandur region of Karnataka, received a [Geographical Indication tag in 2010](#).



## G20 Culture Working Group

- The **G20 Culture Ministers met for the first time in 2020** and highlighted culture's cross-cutting contribution to advancing G20 agenda.
  - Recognizing its impact on various aspects of development, culture was integrated into the G20 agenda as a **Culture Working Group in 2021**, acknowledging its synergies with other policy areas
- The **G20 Culture Working Group** stands among the 13 thematic Working Groups set up by the Indian Presidency to frame the **G20 process in 2023** as part of the Sherpa Track.
- **Priority Areas of CWC:**
  - Protection and Restitution of Cultural Property
  - Harnessing Living Heritage for a Sustainable Future
  - Promotion of Cultural and Creative Industries and Creative Economy
  - Leveraging Digital Technologies for the Protection and Promotion of Culture

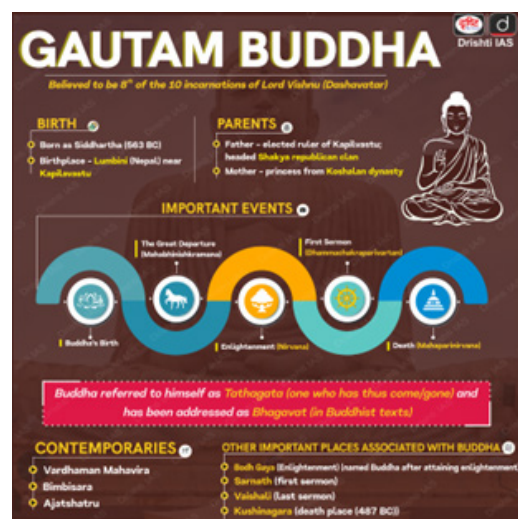
## Buddha's Relevance to the Modern Youth

### Why in News?

The [President of India](#), urged the youth to draw inspiration from the teachings of [Lord Buddha](#), on the occasion of [Dharma Chakra Pravartana Divas](#) (3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023).

- The President reflected on how Lord Buddha's first sermon on Asadha Purnima planted the seeds of the middle path of the Dhamma.

### Who was Lord Buddha?



Note:

### ➤ Major Teachings of Lord Buddha:

- **The Three Marks of Existence:** These are the characteristics of all phenomena that one should understand and accept. They are impermanence (anicca), unsatisfactoriness (dukkha), and non-self (anatta).
- **The Four Noble Truths:** These are the truths about the nature of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path to its cessation. The cause of suffering is ignorance, attachment, and aversion.
  - The cessation of suffering is possible by following the Noble Eightfold Path:

### THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH



- **The Four Sublime States:** These are the positive mental qualities that one should cultivate and radiate to all beings. They are loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita), and equanimity (upekkha).
  - By developing these states, one can foster harmony, empathy, altruism, and peace.
- **The Five Precepts:** These are the basic ethical principles that Buddha laid down for his lay followers.
  - They are: to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication.
  - They help us to avoid harming ourselves and others, to respect life and property, to maintain purity and honesty and to preserve clarity and awareness.

## Kharchi Puja

### Why in News?

Kharchi Puja, a significant festival celebrated in the state of [Tripura](#), has recently garnered attention in the news.

- The festival commenced on **June 26 this year and will continue until July 2.**

### What is the Kharchi Puja?

#### ➤ About:

- Also known as the 'Festival of 14 Gods,' this traditional event involves the worship of **Chaturdasa Devata**, (housed in the ancient Ujjayanta Palace), the ancestral deity of the Tripuri people.
- During the festival, the Tripuri people also worship the earth along with their 14 deities.
- An important ritual in this festival involves the construction of the **Chaturdasha Mandapa**, a structure that symbolizes the royal palace of the Tripuri kings.
- On the day of the Puja, the 14 gods are carried to river "Saidra" by the members of "Chantai" (royal priests). The gods are bathed in the holy water and are brought back to the temple.

#### ➤ History:

- The word 'Kharchi' is derived from two Tripuri words— 'khar' or kharta meaning sin and 'chi' or si meaning cleaning.
  - Although the festival has tribal origins, it is celebrated by both tribal and non-tribal people of Tripura.
- It is believed that the Mother Goddess or Tripura Sundari, the presiding deity of the land who protects the people of Tripura, **menstruates during the time of Ambubachi**, which is observed in June.
  - There is a popular belief that the Earth becomes impure during the menstruation period of the Goddess.
  - Hence, Kharchi Puja is observed to ritualistically clean the Earth after her menstruation is over and wash away the sins of the people in the land.



Note:

States and UTs	Major Festivals
Andhra Pradesh	Makar Sankranti, Ugadi
Arunachal Pradesh	Losar, Solang, Mopin, Monpa festival
Assam	Bihu
Bihar	Chhath Puja
Chhattisgarh	Maghi Purnima, Bastar Dussehra
Goa	Shigmo Mel
Gujarat	Navaratra, Uttarayan (International Kite Festival)
Haryana	Baisakhi, Gugga Naumi
Himachal Pradesh	Gochi, Kullu Dussehra
Jammu & Kashmir	Bahu Mela
Jharkhand	Sarhul, Karam/ Karma
Karnataka	Karaga
Kerala	Onam, Adoor Gajamela
Madhya Pradesh	Lokrang Festival
Maharashtra	Ganesh Chaturthi
Manipur	Yaosang, Cheiraoba, Heikru Hitongba
Meghalaya	Nongkrem Festival
Mizoram	Chapchar Kut,
Nagaland	Hornbill festival, Moatsu, Mimkut
Odisha	Rath Yatra
Punjab	Lohri, Baisakhi
Rajasthan	Gangaur, Teej
Sikkim	Sakewa, Tendong Lho Rum Faat
Tamil Nadu	Pongal
Telangana	Bathukamma
Tripura	Kharchi Puja, Neermahal Festival
Uttar Pradesh	Ram Navmi, Kumbh Mela
Uttarakhand	Magh Mela
West Bengal	Durga Puja

### What is Char Dham Yatra?

#### ➤ About:

- Char Dham Yatra is a **pilgrimage circuit in the Indian state of Uttarakhand**.
- It involves visiting four sacred Hindu shrines located in the Himalayas.
  - The four shrines included in the yatra are **Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri**.

- It is believed that one should complete the **Char Dham Yatra in a clockwise direction**: Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath.

#### ➤ Religious Significance:

- Each of these shrines holds significant religious and **mythological importance in Hinduism**.
- It is believed that undertaking the Char Dham Yatra can cleanse one's sins and lead to spiritual salvation.

#### ➤ Pilgrimage Season:

- **Usually starts in April or May and continues until November**, depending on weather conditions.
- The yatra involves trekking through challenging terrains, including high altitudes and mountainous regions.

#### ➤ Economic Importance:

- The yatra is not only a religious journey but also a **significant cultural and tourism event** for Uttarakhand, attracting visitors from across India and around the world.
- It holds **great economic importance for the local communities**, providing employment opportunities and boosting the tourism industry in the region.



#### ➤ Note:

##### ○ Yamunotri Dham:

- Location: Uttarkashi district.
- Dedicated to: **Goddess Yamuna**.
- **River Yamuna** is the **second-most sacred river in India** after River Ganga.

##### ○ Gangotri Dham:

- Location: Uttarkashi district.
- Dedicated to: **Goddess Ganga**.
- Considered the **most sacred of all Indian rivers**.

##### ○ Kedarnath Dham:

- Location: Rudraprayag district.
- Dedicated to: **Lord Shiva**.
- Situated on the bank of the **Mandakini River**.
- One of the **12 Jyotirlingas** (divine representations of Lord Shiva) in India.

Note:

- **Badrinath Dham:**
  - Location: Chamoli district.
  - Home to the sacred **Badrinarayan Temple**.
  - Dedicated to: **Lord Vishnu**.
  - One of the **holy shrines for Vaishnavites**.

### What is the Char Dam Project?

- **Char Dam Project** is a major infrastructure initiative in the Indian state of Uttarakhand.
- It aims to **improve connectivity and pilgrimage tourism** to the four holy Hindu sites, known as Char Dham.
- Expected to **boost tourism, trade, transport, and employment opportunities** in Uttarakhand.
- Enhances safety and security for pilgrims and strengthens military operations in border areas.
- Facilitates **disaster management and relief operations** in emergencies.



Chardham Yatra Marg Project

## Jagannath Rath Yatra

### Why in News?

The **Jagannath Rath Yatra** officially begins in **Puri, Odisha**. This year, the festival commenced on **June 20, 2023** and will culminate on **June 28, 2023**.

What is Jagannath Rath Yatra?

- **Jagannath Rath Yatra** is an **annual Hindu festival that celebrates** the journey of Lord Jagannath, his elder brother Lord Balabhadra, and his younger sister Goddess Subhadra from **their home temple in Puri, Odisha** to their **aunt's temple in Gundicha, about three kilometres away**.
  - The legend behind the festival is that once, Goddess Subhadra expressed her desire to visit her aunt's place in Gundicha.

- To fulfil her wish, **Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra decided to accompany her on a chariot ride**. This event is commemorated every year by taking the deities on a similar journey.
- The festival dates **back to at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE**, when the Jagannath temple was built by **King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva**. However, some sources suggest that the festival was already in practice since ancient times.
  - The festival is also known as **Festival of Chariots**, as the deities are carried on **three massive wooden chariots that are pulled by devotees with ropes**.
  - It begins on the **second day of the bright fortnight of the month of Ashadha (June-July)** and lasts for **nine days**.
- **Features of the Chariots:**
  - The **rupakar servitors** are skilled craftsmen responsible for carving intricate figures of birds, animals, flowers, and guardian deities on the chariots.

### THE THREE RATHS

	NANDIGHOSA	DARPADALAN	TALADHWAJA
Presiding Deity	Lord Jagannath	Goddess Subhadra	Lord Balabhadra
Wheels	16	12	14
Wooden pieces used	832	593	763
Height	44.2 feet	42.3 feet	43.3 feet
Colour of cloth	Red & yellow	Red & black	Red & green



### Jagannath Puri Temple

- **Jagannath Puri Temple** is one of the most impressive monuments of the **Indian State Odisha**.
  - This temple is known as the "**White Pagoda**" and is a part of **Char Dham** pilgrimages (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram).
- It is a **splendid example of Kalinga architecture**, which is characterised by **curvilinear towers, intricate carvings and ornate sculptures**.

Note:

- The temple complex is surrounded by a high wall with four gates facing the four cardinal directions.
- The main temple consists of four structures: the **vimana (sanctum)**, the **jagamohana (assembly hall)**, the **nata-mandira (festival hall)** and the **bhoga-mandapa (offering hall)**.
- Jagannath Puri temple is called '**Yamanika Tirtha**' where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the **power of 'Yama', the god of death has been nullified in Puri** due to the presence of Lord Jagannath.

## Kathakali

### Why in News?

KK Gopalakrishnan has recently released a captivating book titled "Kathakali Dance Theatre: A Visual Narrative of Sacred Indian Mime."

- The book offers a **behind-the-scenes look into the world of Kathakali**, focusing on the **green room, artists' struggles, and the unique bonds forged during long make-up hours**.



### What is Kathakali?

#### Origin and History:

- Kathakali emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the kingdom of **Travancore (present-day Kerala)**.
  - The art form was initially performed in **temple precincts and later gained popularity in the royal courts**.
- Kathakali is based on **Natya Shastra**, the ancient treatise on dance, written by **Sage Bharata**.
  - However, Kathakali relies on **Hasthalakshana Deepika**, another classical text for its **hand gestures**.

- Kathakali was in peril and on the **verge of extinction in the beginning of 20th century**.
  - Renowned **Poet Vallathol Narayana Menon** and **Manakkulam Mukunda Raja** took the initiative to set up **Kerala Kalamandalam**, a centre of excellence for classical art forms for the revival of kathakali.

#### Dance and Music:

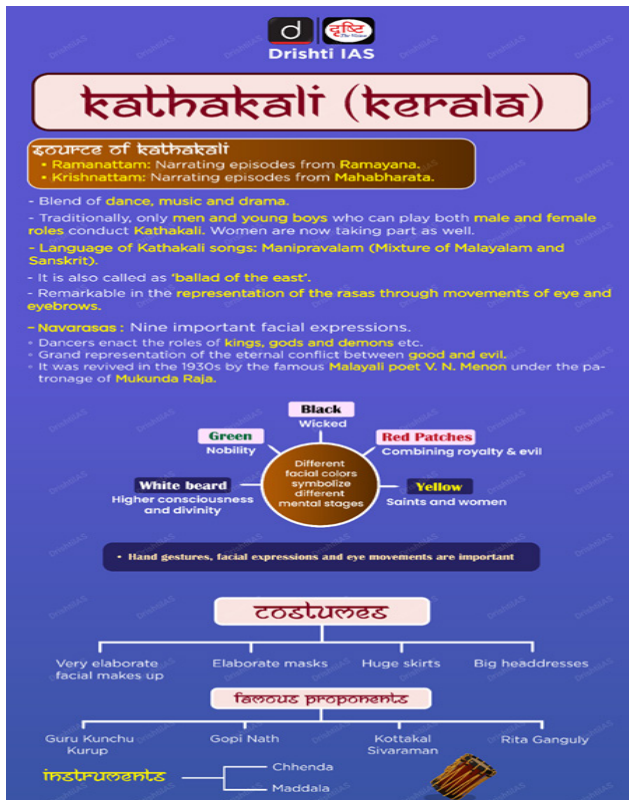
- Kathakali combines elements of **dance, music, mime, and drama**.
- The movements are highly stylized and include **intricate footwork, rhythmic swaying, and various hand gestures called mudras**.
  - The dancers use their facial expressions, known as **rasas**, to **convey emotions and tell stories**.
- **Manipravalam**, a blend of Malayalam and Sanskrit, is the **language used in Kathakali songs**.
  - The text of Kathakali songs is known as **Attakkatha**.
  - **Chenda, Maddalam, Chengila and Elaththalam** are the major instruments used with Kathakali music.

#### Makeup:

Kathakali make-up is classified into five types according to the nature of the character.

- **Pacha (green)**: noble and heroic characters, such as gods, kings and sages.
- **Katti (knife)**: anti-heroes or villains with streaks of nobility or bravery
- **Thadi (beard)**: different types of beards denote different types of characters, such as:
  - Vella Thadi (white beard): divine or benevolent characters
  - Chuvanna Thadi (red beard): evil or demonic characters
  - Karutha Thadi (black beard): forest dwellers or hunters
- **Kari (black)**: characters who are evil, cruel or grotesque, such as demons or witches.
- **Minukku (radiant)**: characters who are gentle, virtuous or refined, such as women, sages or Brahmins.
- The costumes are colourful and extravagant, with heavy jewellery and headdresses.

Note:



## Sengol to be Installed in New Parliament Building

### Why in News?

On May 28<sup>th</sup> 2023, the Prime Minister will inaugurate the new Parliament building, which is part of the Central Vista redevelopment project.

- One of the highlights of the event will be the installation of a historic golden sceptre, called Sengol, near the Speaker's seat.
- The Sengol is a symbol of India's independence and sovereignty, as well as its cultural heritage and diversity.

### What is the Historical Significance of Sengol?

- The Sengol is profound in meaning, derived from the Tamil word "Semmai", it means "Righteousness". It was made of gold or silver and was often decorated with precious stones.
  - A Sengol sceptre was carried by emperors on ceremonial occasions, and used to represent their authority.

- It is associated with the Chola Empire, one of the longest-ruling and most influential dynasties in South India.
  - The Cholas ruled over parts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, and Sri Lanka from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century CE.
  - They were known for their military prowess, maritime trade, administrative efficiency, cultural patronage, and temple architecture.
- The Cholas had a tradition of handing over the Sengol sceptre from one king to another as a mark of succession and legitimacy.
  - The ceremony was usually performed by a high priest or a guru who blessed the new king and conferred him with the Sengol.

### How did Sengol Become a Part of India's Independence?

- Before independence from the British rule in 1947, the then Viceroy - Lord Mountbatten posed a question to the to-be Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru: "What is the ceremony that should be followed to symbolise the transfer of power from British to Indian hands?"
  - PM Nehru then consulted C. Rajagopalachari, commonly known as Rajaji, who went on to become the last Governor-General of India.
    - Rajaji suggested that the Chola model of handing over the Sengol sceptre could be adopted as a suitable ceremony for India's independence.
    - He said that it would reflect India's ancient civilisation and culture, as well as its unity in diversity.
      - The Sengol sceptre was presented to PM Nehru by Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam (a 500-year-old Saivaitic monastery) on August 14, 1947.
  - A golden sceptre was crafted by Vummidi Bangaru Chetty, a famous jeweller in Madras (now Chennai).
    - The Nandi, with its unyielding gaze as the beholder of "Nyaya", is hand-carved at the top.
  - The installation of Sengol in the new Parliament building is not just a symbolic gesture but also a meaningful message.

Note:

- It signifies that India's democracy is rooted in its ancient traditions and values and that it is inclusive and respectful of its diversity and plurality.



### What is the Central Vista Redevelopment Project?

- The Central Vista Redevelopment Project is a project that aims to revamp the Central Vista, India's central administrative area located near Raisina Hill, New Delhi.
- In [Union Budget 2022-23](#), the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs was allocated an amount of Rs 2,600 crore for the construction of non-residential office buildings of the ambitious Central Vista project, including the Parliament as well as the Supreme Court of India.

## Dancing Girl Figurine

### Why in News?

A "contemporised" version of Dancing Girl figurine of [Mohenjodaro](#), was used as a mascot for the [International Museum Expo 2023](#) in Delhi. The traditional craft of Channapatna toys, also protected by a [GI \(geographical indication\)](#) tag, was used to create this mascot.

- However, it has recently sparked controversy due to distortion from the original form.
- The Ministry of Culture defended it as an inspired craft work and a contemporary representation of dwarfpals or Door Guardian.

### What is the Significance of the Dancing Girl Figurine?

#### ➤ About:

- The Dancing Girl figurine is one of the most famous and iconic artefacts of the [Indus Valley Civilization \(IVC\)](#), also known as the Harappan Civilization.
- It was discovered in 1926 by archaeologist Ernest Mackay at Mohenjodaro, one of the largest and most advanced urban settlements of the ancient world.

- The figurine is made of bronze and was sculpted using the lost wax technique.

### Significance of the Dancing Girl:

- The existence of the figurine indicates the presence of high art in Harappan society, reflecting their artistic sophistication.
- The meticulous craftsmanship and symbolic aesthetic of the Dancing Girl suggest that it was not created for utilitarian purposes but as a symbol of cultural significance.
- The figurine also shows a remarkable sense of realism and naturalism, capturing the subtle details of the girl's anatomy, expression and posture. Historian AL Basham also praised her lively pertness, distinguishing her from other ancient civilisations' works.

### What is the Lost Wax Technique?

- The process involves creating a wax model of the desired object, which is then encased in a mold. The mold is typically made of a heat-resistant material such as plaster or ceramic.
  - Once the mold is created, it is heated to melt and remove the wax, leaving behind a hollow cavity in the shape of the original wax model.
- Molten metal, such as bronze or silver, is then poured into the cavity of the mold, filling the space left by the wax.
  - The metal is allowed to cool and solidify, taking the shape of the original wax model. Once the metal has cooled, the mold is broken or otherwise removed, revealing the final metal object.
- The Lost Wax Technique allows for great precision and detail in the final metal casting, as the wax model can be intricately carved or sculpted before being cast. This technique is often used in the creation of sculptures, jewelry, and other decorative metal objects where fine details are desired.
- In contemporary practice, the Lost Wax Technique is often combined with modern technologies such as 3D printing or computer-aided design (CAD) to create the initial wax model, enhancing the precision and efficiency of the process.

Note:

## Thirunelli Temple

### Why in News?

Recently, the [Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage \(INTACH\)](#) has urged the government to conserve the **600-year-old 'Vilakkumadom'**, at the Sree Mahavishnu Temple at Thirunelli, Kerala.

### What are the Key Points Related to Thirunelli Temple?

#### ➤ About:

- Thirunelli Temple, also known as Amalaka or Sidha Temple, is a Vishnu temple in Wayanad district, Kerala.
- The temple gets its name from an **idol of Lord Vishnu resting on an amla tree** in a valley, which was discovered by **Lord Brahma while circling the globe**.

#### ➤ Architecture of Thirunelli Temple:

- The Thirunelli temple's [architecture](#) follows the **traditional Kerala style**. The temple has an **inner sanctorum, surrounded by a tile roof structure, and an open courtyard** around it.
- The east entrance of the temple is decorated with a **granite lamp post**. The outer wall of the temple is bound by granite pillars that are cut in cubicle style, which is **not commonly seen in Kerala**.



### What are the Efforts to Safeguard Cultural Heritage?

#### ➤ Global:

- [Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2005](#)
- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2006.

- [United Nations World Heritage Committee](#): India has been elected as a member of the committee for the term 2021-25.

#### ➤ Indian:

- [Adopt a Heritage Programme](#)
- [Project Mausam](#)
- [Article 49 \(DPSP\)](#)
- [AMASR Act](#) and [National Monuments Authority \(NMA\)](#)
- [PRASHAD Scheme](#)

## Global Buddhist Summit 2023

### Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Culture in partnership with [International Buddhist Confederation \(IBC\)](#) has organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Global Buddhist Summit 2023, which aims to enhance cultural and diplomatic relations with other countries.

### What is the IBC?

- IBC is the **biggest religious Buddhist confederation**.
- The purpose of this body is to create a **role for Buddhism on the global stage so as to help to preserve heritage**, share knowledge, and promote values and to represent a united front for Buddhism to enjoy meaningful participation in the global discourse.
- In November 2011, New Delhi was host to **Global Buddhist Congregation (GBC)**, where the attendees unanimously adopted a resolution to form an international umbrella body – the **International Buddhist Confederation (IBC)**.
- **HQ: Delhi, India.**

### What is the Global Buddhist Summit 2023?

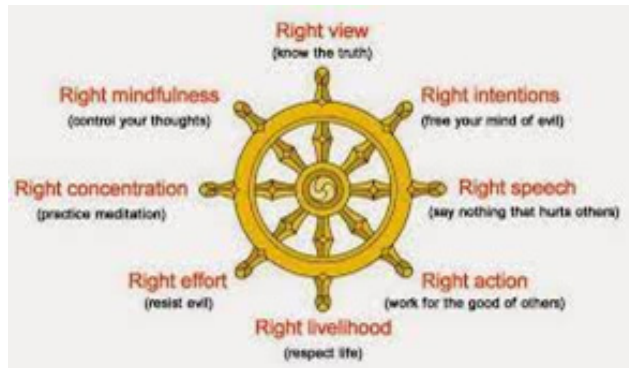
#### ➤ About:

- Buddhist monks from various countries took part in the two-day Summit.
- Eminent scholars, Sangha leaders and **Dharma practitioners from all over the world** attended the conference.
  - There are 173 international participants comprising 84 Sangha member and 151 Indian delegates comprising 46 Sangha members, 40 nuns and 65 laity from outside Delhi.

Note:



- **Theme:** Responses to Contemporary Challenges: Philosophy to Praxis.
  - **Sub Themes:**
    - Buddha Dhamma and Peace
    - Buddha Dhamma: Environmental Crisis, Health and Sustainability
    - Preservation of Nalanda Buddhist Tradition
    - Buddha Dhamma Pilgrimage, Living heritage and Buddha Relics: a resilient foundation to India's centuries-old cultural links to countries in South, Southeast and East Asia.



## Saurashtra Tamil Sangamam

### Why in News?

Nearly 3,000 people are expected to attend **Saurashtra Tamil Sangamam**. The festival aims to showcase “age-old ties” and cultural links between two coastal States of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

The **Saurashtra Tamil Sangamam**, is similar to the [Kashi Tamil Sangamam](#).

### What is Saurashtra Tamil Sangamam?

- **Background:**
  - Centuries ago, invasions between 600 and 1000 years ago forced numerous individuals to **migrate from Saurashtra in Gujarat and establish new settlements in Tamil Nadu's districts around Madurai**, now known as **Tamil Saurashtrian**.
    - People of Gujarati origin have settled in various places in TamilNadu, such as **Tiruchi, Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, and Salem**, creating cultural connections between **Gujarat and Tamil Nadu**.
- **Highlights of the Festival:**
  - The festival aims to **highlight the cultural diversity and strength of India** and to **reconnect people with pilgrimage destinations and cultural heritage**.

- This event will take place at multiple locations in Gujarat such as **Somnath, Dwarka and the Statue of Unity** at Kevadia.



### Significance of Logo:

- It is a representation of the **merging of the silk fabric expertise of the Tamil Saurashtrian people and the textile industry of Gujarat**.
- The confluence of the **two cultures is depicted through the Somnath temple**, the place of origin of the Saurashtrians, and the **Meenakshi temple near Madurai**, where they settled.
- A young woman, posing in a **dancing posture with dandiya (Gujarat) and bharatanatyam (Tamil Nadu)**, embodies the coming together of two art forms.
- The **upper tricolour signifies the message of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'**, while the **blue colour on the lower side symbolises the merging of the two states with the sea**.

### What is Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat?

- **About:** It was launched in 2015 to promote engagement amongst the people of different States/UTs so as to enhance **mutual understanding and bonding between people of diverse cultures**, thereby securing stronger unity and integrity of India.
- **Ministry Involved:** The **Ministry of Education** has been designated as the Nodal Ministry for co-ordination of the programme.

Note:

- **Activities Under the Scheme:** Every State and UT in the country would be paired with another State/UT for a time period, during which they **would carry out a structured engagement with one another in the spheres of language, literature, cuisine, festivals, cultural events, tourism etc.**

## World Heritage Day

### Why in News?

The **International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)** declared April 18<sup>th</sup> as the **International Day for Monuments and Sites**, also known as **World Heritage Day**, in 1982.

- The **theme for this year is "Heritage Changes,"** which focuses on the role of **cultural heritage in climate action** and its importance in protecting vulnerable communities.

### What is the Status of Heritage Sites in India?

- **About:**
  - India is currently home to **40 UNESCO World Heritage Sites**, making it the country with the sixth-largest number of sites in the world.
  - Out of these, **32 are cultural sites, 7 are natural sites, and one is a mixed-type site, the Khangchendzonga National Park.**
    - The cultural heritage sites in India include **ancient temples, forts, palaces, mosques, and archaeological sites** that reflect the rich history and diversity of the country.

### Basava Jayanti





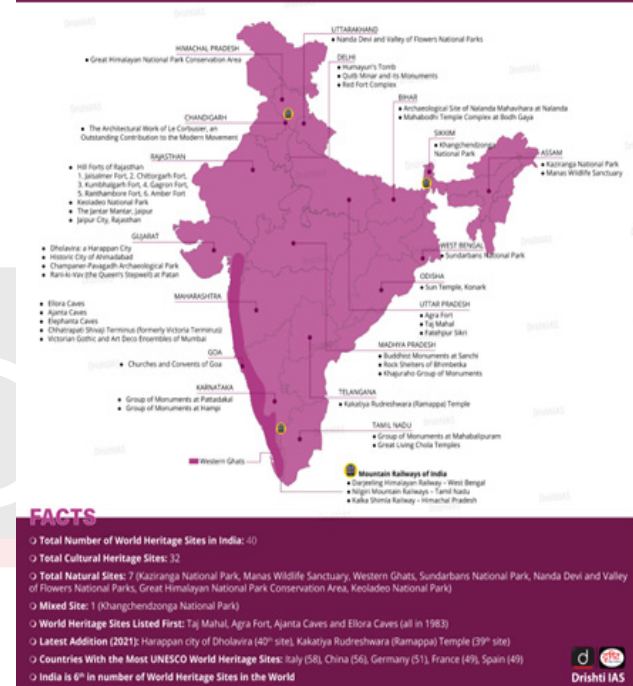

# Basavanna

- Basavanna, a 12<sup>th</sup> century poet and philosopher, was the **founder of Lingayatism.**
- He was **minister to Bijjala, a Kalachurya king** who succeeded the Chalukyas and ruled from Kalyana.
- He **founded the Anubhava Mantapa**, which is often claimed to be the **first Parliament of the world established in Basavakalyana** (then called Kalyana) where Sharanas (poets and socio-spiritual reformers) deliberated for fundamental social change.
- The **Sharana movement** he presided over attracted people from all castes, and like most strands of the **Bhakti movement**, produced a corpus of **literature, the vachanas.**

- The natural heritage sites in India include **national parks, wildlife reserves, and natural landscapes** that showcase the country's unique biodiversity and ecological significance.

The mixed-type site in India, the **Khangchendzonga National Park**, is known for its **cultural significance as well as its biodiversity**, as it is home to several rare and endangered species.

## UNESCO World Heritage Sites



- Recent Government Initiatives Related to Heritage Conservation: ?
  - Adopt a Heritage Programme
  - Project Mausam

Note:

## Vardhaman Mahavira

# VARDHAMAN MAHAVIRA

The 24<sup>th</sup> and last Tirthankara; succeeded the 23<sup>rd</sup> Tirthankara, Parshvanatha  
(Mahavira was not the founder of Jainism)

## BIRTH

- To King Siddhartha of Kundalgram and Queen Trishala, a Lichchhavi princess
- In 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, Vajji kingdom (modern day Vaishali, Bihar)
- Belonged to Ikshvaku dynasty

Mahavir Jayanti, one of the most auspicious festivals for Jains, marks the birth of Vardhamana Mahavira

## SPIRITUAL LIFE

- Abandoned worldly life at age 30
- Attained 'kaivalya' (omniscience) at age 42
- Delivered his first sermon at Pava (near Patna)

A symbol is associated with every Tirthankara, Mahavira's symbol was a lion

## DEATH

- Believed to be passed away and attained Moksha at age 72 (5<sup>th</sup> century BC)
- Died at Pavapuri (near modern-day Rajgir, Bihar)

Moksha - liberation from the cycle of birth and death

## TITLES

- Mahavira (great hero)
- Jaina/Jitendriya (who conquered all his senses)
- Nirgrantha (who is free from all bonds)

## TEACHINGS (JAIN AGAMAS)

- Ahimsa (non-violence)
- Satya (truth)
- Asteya (non-stealing)
- Aparigraha (non-attachment)
- Brahmacharya (chastity) (propounded by Mahavira)

Mahavira and his disciples taught in Prakrit to teach ordinary people



## Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism

### Why in News?

The [Dalai Lama](#) has named a US-born Mongolian boy as the 10th Khalkha Jetsun Dhampa, the head of the Janang tradition of [Tibetan Buddhism](#) and the Buddhist spiritual head of Mongolia.

- This announcement has brought attention back to the larger question of the Dalai Lama's own reincarnation, which is a civilizational struggle between China and Tibetans over who controls Tibetan Buddhism.

### What is the Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism?

- **Buddhism Schools in Tibet:**
  - [Buddhism](#) became the predominant religion in Tibet by the 9th century AD. Tibetan Buddhism has four major schools: Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug.
  - The Janang school is one of the smaller schools that grew as an offshoot of the Sakya school. The Dalai Lama belongs to the Gelug school.
- **History of Reincarnation:**
  - The cycle of birth, death and rebirth is one of Buddhism's key beliefs, although early Buddhism did not organise itself based on this belief in [reincarnation](#).

Note:

- However, **Tibet's hierarchical system seemingly emerged in the 13th century**, and the first instances of formally recognizing the reincarnations of lamas can be found at this time.
- The **Gelug school developed a strong hierarchy and instituted the tradition of succession through reincarnation**, with the **5th grand lama of the school being conferred the title of Dalai Lama**.
- **Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism:**
  - According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the **spirit of a deceased lama** is reborn in a child, which secures a continuous line of succession through **successive re-embodiments**.
  - Several procedures are followed to recognize '**Tulkus**' (recognised reincarnations), including the **predecessor leaving guidance regarding his reincarnation**, the **prospective child undergoing multiple 'tests'**, and other **oracles and lamas with the power of divination being consulted** before the final proclamation is made.
  - There are also procedures to iron out disputes, such as making the final decision by **divination employing the dough-ball method before a sacred**

### Who is Dalai Lama?

- Dalai Lama is a title given by the Tibetan people for the foremost spiritual leader of the Gelug or "**Yellow Hat**" **school of Tibetan Buddhism**, the newest of the classical schools of Tibetan Buddhism.
  - The **14<sup>th</sup> and current Dalai Lama is Tenzin Gyatso**.
- The Dalai Lamas are believed to be **manifestations of 'Avalokiteshvara' or Chenrezig**, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet.
- **Bodhisattvas** are realized beings inspired by a wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, who have vowed to be reborn in the world to help humanity.

## Pattanam Site

### Why in News?

Recently, some excavations have uncovered the Pattanam Site in Kerala, revealing that Pattanam was a thriving urban center from the **5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.** to the **5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.**

### What are the Key Points of Pattanam Site?

- **About:**
    - Pattanam, located in central Kerala, is home to the **only multi-cultural archaeological site** on the southwestern coast of the Indian subcontinent.
    - The excavations have uncovered **less than 1% of the site so far**, but the evidence has found that it was a thriving urban center around 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D., with its **peak phase from 100 B.C. to A.D. 300**.
    - It was known as Muziris, the "**first emporium**" of the **Indian Ocean**, having rigorous cultural and commercial exchanges between the **Greco-Roman classical age** and ancient **South Indian civilization**.
      - The name Muziris is believed to have originated from the Tamil word "Muciri", which means "**the land of seven rivers**".
  - **Pattanam Excavations:**
    - The technological, metallurgical, literary, and artistic advances of this phase bear witness to rigorous cultural and commercial exchanges.
    - The Pattanam excavations have unearthed over 45 lakh sherds (ceramic fragments); these include approximately 1.4 lakh belonging to the **littoral regions of the Mediterranean, the River Nile, the Red Sea, the western and eastern Indian Oceans, and the South China Sea**. Recent findings include the seal of a sphinx, native to the ancient Greek city of Thebes.
- ### What Greco-Roman Classical Age?
- The Greco-Roman classical age refers to a period of ancient history spanning from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, when the **cultures of Greece and Rome exerted a significant influence** on the Mediterranean world and beyond.
  - This period is known for its many achievements in art, literature, philosophy, science, and politics, and it laid the foundation for many of the cultural traditions that continue to shape the modern world.
  - During this time, **Greece and Rome produced some of the most influential thinkers** (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle), artists, and leaders in human history, and their ideas and achievements continue to inspire people to this day.

Note:

## Menace of Missing Antiquities in India

### Why in News?

There is a formidable gap between **artefact** that has been “officially” declared missing and what is **surfacing in global markets** or being found in museum shelves and catalogues.

- Since Independence, **486 antiquities have been reported as missing** from the **3,696 monuments** protected and maintained by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.

### What is Antiquity?

- The **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act of 1972**, which came into effect on April 1, 1976, defines an “antiquity” as any object or work of art that has been in existence for at least 100 years.
  - This includes **coins, sculptures, paintings, epigraphs, detached articles**, and other items that reflect science, art, literature, religion, customs, morals, or politics from a bygone era.
- For “manuscript, record or other document which is of scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value”, this duration is “**not less than 75 years.**”
- **Protection Initiative:**
  - **Indian:**
    - In India, Item-67 of the **Union List**, Item-12 of the **State List**, and Item-40 of the **Concurrent List of the Constitution** deal with the country’s heritage.
    - Before Independence, the **Antiquities (Export Control) Act** was passed in April 1947 to ensure that no antiquity could be exported without a license.
    - The **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act** was enacted in 1958 to protect ancient monuments and archaeological sites from destruction and misuse.
  - **Global:**
    - **UNESCO** formulated the 1970 **Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property**.
    - The **United Nations Security Council** also passed resolutions in 2015 and 2016 calling for the **protection of cultural heritage sites in conflict zones**.

### What is ‘Provenance’ of Antiquity?

- **Provenance** includes the list of all owners from the time the object left its maker’s possession to the time it was acquired by the current owner.

### What is the Procedure of Bringing Back the Antiquities?

- **Categories:**
  - **Antiquities taken out of India pre-independence;**
  - Antiquities which were taken out **since independence until March 1976;**
  - **Antiquities have been taken out of the country since April 1976.**
- For **Antiquities taken out of India before independence**, requests for their retrieval must be raised bilaterally or on international fora.
  - For example, in **November 2022**, the **Maharashtra government** announced that it was working to bring back the **sword of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj from London**.
- Antiquities in the **second and third categories** can be retrieved easily by **raising an issue bilaterally with proof of ownership** and with the help of the **UNESCO convention**.

## Hybrid Gamosas

### Why in the News?

Recently, the **Bangla Sahitya Sabha, Assam (BSSA)** felicitated guests at a function with “**hybrid gamosas**” made up of **Assamese Gamocha and Bengali Gamchas** cut in half and sewn together. The organization issued an apology after a controversy erupted.

- The BSSA is a newly formed **literary and cultural society** with the aim of serving as a **meeting point for Bengalis of Assam**.

### What is Assamese Gamocha?

- **About:**
  - Assamese Gamocha is a traditional handwoven cotton towel, which is an integral part of Assamese culture and tradition.
  - It is a **rectangular piece of cloth**. The towel comes in various colors and designs, and the **most popular among them are the red and white ones with a Phulam** known as the ‘Gamocha design’.

Note:

- The word 'Gamocha' is derived from the Assamese word 'Ga' (body) and 'Mocha' (wipe), which means a towel to wipe the body. The weavers use a traditional loom called the 'Taat Xaal' to weave the towel.

#### ➤ Recognition:

- The Assamese Gamocha has gained national and international recognition for its unique design and cultural significance. It was granted the [Geographical Indication \(GI\) tag](#), which is a recognition of its origin and unique characteristics.
- The GI tag ensures that the Gamocha is protected from imitations and helps to promote the local weavers and their traditional weaving techniques.

#### ➤ Cultural Significance:

- The Assamese Gamocha is a **symbol of Assamese culture and tradition**. The towel is used in various ways in daily life, and each use has a specific cultural significance.
  - It is used as a **headscarf by women during traditional ceremonies and functions**, and it is a **sign of respect and honor when it is presented to someone as a gift**.
  - The Gamocha is also used during the **Bihu festival**, which is the most important festival of Assam. It is **draped around the neck of the Bihu dancers**, and it is an essential part of their costume. The towel is also used as a symbol of unity and brotherhood during the Bihu festival.



#### What is Bengali Gamcha?

- Bengali Gamcha traditional handwoven cotton towel, which is an integral part of Assamese culture and tradition. It is a **rectangular piece of cloth**. It comes in a **red-and-white chequered pattern**.



## Ministry of Culture's Initiative to Promote of Art and Culture

### Why in News?

The [Ministry of Culture](#) has implemented a Scheme to **protect all genres of artists, including folk song artists**, called the '**Scheme of [Scholarship](#) and Fellowship for Promotion of Art and Culture**'.

- This scheme has three components that aim to support **young artists, outstanding persons in different cultural fields**, and those conducting cultural research.

### What are the Components of the Scheme?

#### ➤ Award of Scholarships to Young Artists in Different Cultural Fields (SYA):

- Provides a scholarship for a period of 2 years to selected beneficiaries in the **age group of 18-25 years**.
- Candidates should have undergone training under **any Guru or Institution for a minimum of 5 years**.

#### ➤ Award of Senior/Junior Fellowships:

- Senior Fellowship is provided to **selected Fellows in the age group of 40 years and above** for 2 years for cultural research.
- Junior Fellowship is provided to selected Fellows in the age group of 25 to 40 for 2 years.
- Up to 400 Senior & Junior Fellowships are awarded in one batch year.

#### ➤ Award of Tagore National Fellowship for Cultural Research (TNFCR):

- Candidates are selected under two categories, [Tagore National Fellowship](#) and [Tagore Research Scholarship](#), to work on cultural research by affiliation under different participating institutions in 4 different groups.
  - Selection of Fellows and Scholars is made by the **National Selection Committee (NSC)**.

- **Additional Component:** Under the scheme of "**Project Grants to Individuals for Research in the Performing Arts**", the [Sangeet Natak Akademi](#) provides financial assistance to individuals on recommendation of the **Advisory Committee**.

Note:

## India's Traditional New Year Festivals

### Why in News?

Recently, India celebrated **Chaitra Sukladi, Ugadi, Gudi Padwa, Cheti Chand, Navreh and Sajibu Cheiraoba**. These festivals of the **spring season** mark the **beginning of the traditional new year** in India.

### What are the Traditional New Year Festivals in India?

#### ➤ Chaitra Sukladi:

- It marks the beginning of the new year of the **Vikram Samvat** also known as the Vedic [Hindu] calendar.
- Vikram Samvat is based on the day when the emperor **Vikramaditya defeated Sakas**, invaded Ujjain and called for a new era.
- It is the first day during the **waxing phase** (in which the visible side of moon is getting bigger every night) of the **moon in the Chaitra** (first month of Hindu calendar).

#### ➤ Gudi Padwa and Ugadi:

- These festivals are celebrated by the people in the **Deccan region** including **Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra**.
- A famous **concoction served is jaggery (sweet) and neem (bitter)**, called **bevu-bella in the South**, signifying that life brings both happiness and sorrows.
- **Gudi is a doll** prepared in **Maharashtrian homes**.
  - For Ugadi, doors in homes are **adorned with mango leaf decorations** called toranalu or Torana in Kannada.

#### ➤ Cheti Chand:

- **Cheti Chand** is the new year festival of the **Sindhi community**.
- The festival is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Jhulelal**, the **patron saint of the Sindhi community**.

#### ➤ Vaishakhi:

- It is also pronounced as **Baisakhi**, observed by Hindus and Sikhs.

- It commemorates the formation of **Khalsa panth** of warriors under **Guru Gobind Singh** in 1699.
- **Baisakhi** was also the day when colonial British empire officials committed the **Jallianwala Bagh massacre** at a gathering, an event influential to the Indian movement against colonial rule.

#### ➤ Navreh:

- Navreh is the **Kashmiri New Year's Day**.
- The day is marked by performing various rituals, decorating houses with flowers, preparing traditional dishes, and offering prayers to the deities.

#### ➤ Sajibu Cheiraoba:

- It is considered one of the most important festivals of **Manipur**.
- It is celebrated with great pomp and joy, especially by the **Meiteis of the state**.

#### ➤ Vishu:

- It is a **Hindu festival celebrated in the Indian state of Kerala, Tulu Nadu region in Karnataka, Mahé district of Union Territory of Pondicherry**, neighbouring areas of Tamil Nadu and their diaspora communities.
- The **festival marks the first day of Medam (falls in the middle of April in the Gregorian calendar), the 9th month in the solar calendar in Kerala**.

#### ➤ Puthandu:

- Also known as **Puthuvarudam or Tamil New Year**, is the first day of the year on the **Tamil calendar and traditionally celebrated as a festival**.
- The festival date is set with the **solar cycle of the lunisolar Hindu calendar**, as the first day of the Tamil month Chithirai.
- It therefore falls on or about **14th April every year on the Gregorian calendar**.

#### ➤ Bohag Bihu:

- **Bohag Bihu or Rongali Bihu also called Xaat Bihu** (seven Bihus) is a traditional aboriginal ethnic festival celebrated in **the state of Assam and other parts of northeastern India** by the indigenous ethnic groups of Assam.
- It marks the beginning of the **Assamese New Year**.
- It usually falls in the **2<sup>nd</sup> week of April**, historically signifying the time of harvest.

Note:

## Sandalwood Buddha Statue

### Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India gifts a **sandalwood Buddha statue** to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during the latter's two-day state visit.

- The statue depicts Buddha sitting in 'dhyana mudra' under the **Bodhi tree**.

### What is Sandalwood?

- **About:** *Santalum album*, commonly known as **Indian Sandalwood**, is a **dry deciduous forest species native to China, India, Indonesia, Australia, and the Philippines**.
  - Sandalwood has been long associated with the Indian heritage & culture, as the country contributed **85% of the world' sandalwood trade erstwhile**. However, lately this has been declining at a fast rate.
- **Features:** This small tropical tree **grows to 20m high with red wood and a variety of dark colors of bark** (dark brown, reddish and dark grey).
- **Uses:** Because it is **strong and durable**, Sandalwood is mostly harvested for its timber.
  - Indian Sandalwood is one of the **most sacred herbs of Ayurveda**.
- **Distribution in India:** In India, sandalwood is mostly grown in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.
  - **Karnataka** is sometimes called as '**Gandhara Gudi' or the land of sandalwood**. The art of sandalwood carving has been an integral part of Karnataka's cultural heritage for centuries. Its earliest origins can be traced back to the 3rd century B.C. The state has also set up a **Sandalwood Development Board** to ensure that the resources are sustainably managed.
- **IUCN Red List Status:** Vulnerable.

### What is Mudra in Buddhism?

- In **Buddhism**, mudras are **hand gestures or positions that are used during meditation** and other practices to help focus the mind, channel energy, and deepen one's connection to the teachings. Here are some of the mudras commonly used in Buddhism:
  - **Dhyana Mudra:** In this mudra, **the hands are placed on the lap, with the right hand on top of the left, and the thumbs touching**.

- This mudra symbolizes meditation, concentration, and inner peace.
- **Anjali Mudra:** This is the most common mudra used in Buddhism, and it involves **pressing the palms together in front of the chest, with the fingers pointing upwards**.
  - It represents respect, greeting, and gratitude.
- **Vitarka Mudra:** This mudra is also known as the **"teaching mudra" or "gesture of discussion,"** and it involves **holding the right hand up, with the thumb and index finger touching to form a circle**.
  - It represents the transmission of knowledge and the communication of the Buddha's teachings.
- **Varada Mudra:** In this mudra, **the right hand is extended downwards, with the palm facing outwards**.
  - It represents generosity, compassion, and the granting of wishes.
- **Abhaya Mudra:** This mudra involves **raising the right hand up to shoulder height, with the palm facing outwards**.
  - It represents fearlessness, protection, and the dispelling of negativity.
- **Bhumisparsha Mudra:** This mudra involves **touching the ground with the fingertips of the right hand, while the left hand rests on the lap**.
  - It represents the moment of the Buddha's enlightenment, and the gesture symbolizes the earth witnessing his attainment of enlightenment.
- **Uttarabodhi Mudra:** In this the **hands are held in front of the chest with the fingers of the left hand pointing upward and the fingers of the right hand pointing downward. The thumbs are then placed together in the center, creating a triangle shape**.
  - This mudra represents the union of wisdom and compassion, the balance of masculine and feminine energies, and the attainment of enlightenment through the integration of all aspects of thyself.
- **Dharma Chakra Mudra:** In this **the hands are held in front of the chest with the thumb and index finger of each hand forming a circle. The remaining three fingers of each hand are extended upwards**, representing the Three Jewels of Buddhism: **the Buddha, the Dharma (his teachings), and the Sangha (the community of practitioners)**. The circle made by the thumb and index finger represents the wheel of the Dharma, which

Note:



- This mudra represents the constant cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, and the Buddha's teachings as the means to break free from this cycle.
- **Karana Mudra:** In this the **left hand is brought up to the heart, palm facing forward. The index and little fingers point straight upward. while the other three fingers are curled towards the palm.**
  - This gesture is often seen in depictions of the Buddha or bodhisattvas, as a symbol of protection and dispelling of negativity. The index finger is said to represent the energy of wisdom and the ability to overcome obstacles.

- **Jnana Mudra:** In this the **index finger and thumb are brought together to form a circle, while the other three fingers are extended outwards.**
  - This gesture represents the unity of individual consciousness with the universal consciousness, and the connection between the practitioner and the teachings of the Buddha.
- **Tarjani Mudra:** In this, the index finger is extended upward, while the other fingers are curled towards the palm. Tarjani Mudra, also known as the "threatening gesture."
  - It is used as a symbol of warning or protection against evil forces or harmful influences.



**Bhumisparsha Mudra**  
Touching the earth as Gautama did, to invoke the earth as witness to the truth of his words.



**Varada Mudra**  
Fulfilment of all wishes; the gesture of charity.



**Dhyana Mudra**  
The gesture of absolute balance, of meditation. The hands are relaxed in the lap, and the tips of the thumbs and fingers touch each other. When depicted with a begging bowl this is a sign of the head of an order.



**Abhaya Mudra**  
Gesture of reassurance, blessing, and protection. "Do not fear."



**Dharmachakra Mudra**  
The gesture of teaching usually interpreted as turning the Wheel of Law. The hands are held level with the heart, the thumbs and index fingers form circles.



**Vitarka Mudra**  
Intellectual argument, discussion. The circle formed by the thumb and index finger is the sign of the Wheel of Law.



**Tarjani Mudra**  
Threat, warning. The extended index finger is pointed at the opponent.



**Namaskara Mudra**  
Gesture of greeting, prayer, and adoration. Buddhas no longer make this gesture because they do not have to show devotion to anything.



**Jnana Mudra**  
Teaching. The hand is held at chest level and the thumb and index finger again form the Wheel of Law.



**Karana Mudra**  
Gesture with which demons are expelled.



**Ksepana Mudra**  
Two hands together in the gesture of 'sprinkling' the nectar of immortality.



**Uttarabodhi Mudra**  
Two hands placed together above the head with the index fingers together and the other fingers intertwined. The gesture of supreme enlightenment.

Note:



drishti

## Rural Tourism

### Why in News?

Rural Tourism and Rural Homestays (CNA – RT and RH) under the Ministry of Tourism has identified **six niche experiences for tourists wanting to visit rural India**, including agritourism, art and culture, [ecotourism](#), wildlife, tribal tourism, and homestays.

### What is the Concept of Rural Tourism?

#### ➤ About:

- Rural tourism in India is a form of tourism that **focuses on exploring and experiencing the rural lifestyle and culture.**
- It involves **traveling to rural areas and participating in various activities** such as farming, handicrafts, and village walks, to gain a deeper understanding of the local culture and way of life.
  - For instance, Tamil Nadu's **Kolukkumalai is the highest tea plantation** in the world; Kerala's Dewalokam is a yoga centre on the banks of a river; **Nagaland's Konyak Tea** retreat takes visitors on a trip through tribal culture etc.

#### ➤ Scope:

- India's rural tourism potential lies in its **diverse and vibrant culture, handicrafts, folk arts, festivals, and fairs.**
- U.S.-based market research firm Grand View Research estimates that agritourism alone will develop at a **Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 11.4% from 2022 to 2030.**

### What are the Related Initiatives?

- The Government is exploring organic agriculture areas developed under the [Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana \(PKVY\)](#) and [Mission Organic Value Chain Development in North East Region \(MOVCD-NER\)](#) for development as rural tourist spots.
- **Best Tourism Village Competition Portal** was launched recently to select the best tourism village from across the country, and also to promote rural tourism in the country
  - The 'Best Tourism Village Competition' will be held in three stages, and will seek entries at district level, state level and finally at the national level.

- The Ministry of Tourism has launched **Visit India Year 2023**, focusing on inbound travel to India, to highlight **varied tourism offerings of our country and showcase them to the global tourists.**
- [PRASHAD \(National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual and Heritage Augmentation Drive\) scheme](#) was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in 2015.
  - Till date, under PRASHAD scheme, a total of 45 projects for an amount of Rs.1586.10 Crore have been sanctioned.
- [Swadesh Darshan scheme](#) in 2014-15 with focus on integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country.
  - 76 projects were sanctioned for an amount of Rs.5315.59 Crore under various themes such as eco, heritage, Himalayan, coastal theme etc.

## Jagannath Temple

### Why in News?

Recently, **Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal** has backed the entry of **foreign nationals inside the world-famous Jagannath Temple** in Puri, wading into a debate that has lasted for decades and periodically triggered controversy.

- Currently, **only Hindus are allowed inside the shrine** to offer prayers to the deities in the **sanctum sanctorum.**
- A sign at the **Lion's Gate (main entrance)** of the Temple clearly states: **"Only Hindus are allowed."**

### What are the Key Facts about Jagannath Temple?

- The temple is believed to have been constructed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by **King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva** of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.
- Jagannath Puri temple is called '**Yamanika Tirtha**' where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the power of 'Yama', the **god of death has been nullified in Puri** due to the presence of **Lord Jagannath.**
- This temple was called the "**White Pagoda**" and is a part of [Char Dham pilgrimages](#) (**Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram**).
- The temple is known for its **unique architecture, which includes a massive compound wall and a large temple complex** with multiple towers, halls, and shrines.

Note:

- The temple's main attraction is the [Annual Rath Yatra festival](#), in which the three main deities of the temple, **Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra** are taken out in a grand procession on a chariot.
- The temple is also known for its unique food offering, the **Mahaprasad**, which is prepared in the temple kitchen and is distributed among the devotees.



### What are the Other Popular Monuments of Odisha?

- Konark Sun Temple (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
- Lingaraja Temple
- Tara Tarini Temple

## Revamping Monument Mitra Scheme

### Why in News?

Private firms will soon be able to partner with [Archaeological Survey of India](#) for the upkeep of **1,000 monuments under the Monument Mitra Scheme**, which involves adopting and **maintaining heritage sites**.

- Revamped scheme would be based on the [Corporate Social Responsibility](#) model and a new website having the **names of all the heritage sites**, would also be launched.

### What is the Monument Mitra Scheme?

- **Monument Mitra**' is the term coined for an entity partnering with the government under the '[Adopt A Heritage](#)' project.
  - It was launched under the **Ministry of Tourism** earlier and then transferred to the **Ministry of**

### Culture.

- The project aims to **develop monuments, heritage and tourist sites** across India by inviting corporate entities, public sector companies or individuals to 'adopt' them

### What is a Heritage?

#### ➤ About:

- [Heritage](#) is deemed to mean those buildings, artefacts, structures, areas and precincts that are of **historic, aesthetic, architectural, ecological or cultural significance**.
- It must be recognized that the '**cultural landscape**' around a **heritage site is critical for the interpretation of the site** and its built heritage and thus is very much its integral part.
- The three key concepts that can be considered to determine whether a property can be listed as a Heritage are:
  - Historic significance
  - Historic integrity
  - Historic context.
- In India, heritage comprises archaeological sites, remains, ruins. The **primary custodian of 'Monuments and Sites'** in the country, i.e. [Archeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) and their counterparts protect them.
  - Project Mausam

## Jain Community Protests

### Why in News?

The [Jain community](#) has been protesting over demands related to two holy sites — **Sammed Shikhar on Parasnath hill in Jharkhand and Shatrunjaya hill in Palitana of Gujarat**.

- In Jharkhand, the issue is about Parasnath hill being declared a tourist spot and an [eco-sensitive zone](#) without consulting the people from the Jain community, while in Gujarat, the row is over the vandalising of a shrine and related security concerns in Shatrunjaya Hill.

### What are the Key Facts about Parasnath Hills and Shatrunjaya Hill?

#### ➤ Parasnath Hills:

- **Parasnath Hills** are a range of hills located in Giridih district of Jharkhand.

Note:

- The **highest peak is 1350 metres**. It is one of the most important pilgrimage centre for Jains. They call it Sammed Sikhar.
- The hill is named after **Parasnath, the 23rd Tirthankara**.
- Twenty of Jain Tirthankaras **attained salvation on this hill. For each of them there is a shrine (gumti or tuk)** on the hill.
- Some of the temples on the hill are believed to be more than 2,000 years old.
- The Santhals call it **Marang Buru, the hill of the deity**. They celebrate a **hunting festival on the full moon day in Baisakh (mid-April)**.
- Every year, thousands of Jains from across the world undertake the 27 km long trek of climbing the hills to reach the summit.
- **Palitana and Shatrunjaya Hill:**
  - Shatrunjaya Hill is a sacred site containing hundreds of shrines in Palitana town, Bhavnagar District, Gujarat.
  - The shrines were **sanctified when Rishabha, the first Tirthankara of Jainism**, gave his first sermon in the temple on the hilltop.
  - It is one of the Jainism's holiest pilgrimage sites, the Shatrunjaya hill is an **incredible hill studded with temples, built over 900 years**.
  - It is said that Adinath (also known as Rishabha), the founder of Jainism, **meditated beneath the rayan tree at the summit**.

### What is Jainism?

- Jainism came to prominence in the **6th century B.C.**, when **Lord Mahavira** propagated the religion.
- There were **24 great teachers**, the last of whom was **Lord Mahavira**.
- These twenty-four teachers were called **Tirthankaras**-people who had attained all knowledge (Moksha) while living and preached it to the people.
- The first Tirthankara was **Rishabhatha**.
- The word Jaina comes from the **term Jina, meaning conqueror**.
- Tirthankara is a Sanskrit word meaning 'Ford maker', i.e., one who is able to ford the river, to cross beyond the perpetual flow of earthly life.
- Jainism attaches utmost importance to ahimsa or non-violence.

- It preaches **5 mahavratas (the 5 great vows)**:
  - Ahimsa (Non-violence)
  - Satya (Truth)
  - Asteya or Acharya (Non-stealing)
  - Aparigraha (Non-attachment/non-possession)
  - Brahmacharya (Celibacy/Chastity)
- Among these 5 teachings, **the Brahmacharya (Celibacy/Chastity) was added by Mahavira**.
- The **three jewels or Triratna of Jainism include**:
  - Samyak Darshana (right faith).
  - Samyak Gyana (right knowledge).
  - Samyak Charitra (right conduct).
- Jainism is a religion of **self-help**.
  - There are no gods or spiritual beings that will help human beings.
  - It does not condemn the varna system.
- In later times, **it got divided into two sects**:
  - Shvetambaras (white-clad) under Shthalabahu.
  - Digambaras (sky-clad) under the leadership of Bhadrabahu.

## Mural Art

### Why in News?

Recently, the Wall of Peace, a **great work of modern mural art on the 700-foot long compound wall** of Government Vocational Higher Secondary School at Cherpulassery (Kerala), was inaugurated.



### What is Special about Mural Painting?

- Indian Mural Paintings are **paintings made on the walls of caves and palaces**.

Note:

- The earliest evidence of the murals is the **beautiful frescoes painted on the caves of Ajanta and Ellora**, the Bagh caves and Sittanvasal cave.
- In the old scripts and literature, **there was much evidences of mural paintings.**
  - According to Vinaya Pitaka, **the noted courtesan of Vaishali – Amrapali employed painters to paint the kings**, traders and merchants of that time on the walls of her palace.

### What is the Technique of Indian Wall Paintings?

- The **technique and process of making Indian wall paintings has been discussed in the Vishnudharmotaram**, a Sanskrit text of the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century CE.
- The process of these paintings **appears to have been the same in all the early examples** that have survived with an only exception in the Rajarajeshwara temple at Tanjore which is supposed to be done in a true fresco method over the surface of the rock.
- Most of the colours were locally available.
- Brushes were made up from the hair of animals, such as goat, camel, mongooses, etc.
- The ground was coated with an exceedingly thin layer of lime plaster over which paintings were drawn in water colours.
- In the **true fresco method, the paintings are done when the surface wall is still wet**, so that the pigments go deep inside the wall surface.
- The **other method of painting which was followed in most of the cases of Indian painting is known as tempora.**
  - It is a method of painting on the lime plastered surface which has been allowed to dry first and then drenched with fresh lime water.
  - On the surface, thus obtained, the artist proceeded to sketch.
  - The **principal colours in use were red ochre, vivid red (vermilion), yellow ochre**, indigo blue, lapis lazuli, lamp black (Kajjal), chalk white, terraverte and green.

### What is a Mural?

- A mural is **any piece of artwork that is painted or applied directly on a wall.**

- More broadly, **mural art also appears on ceilings or any other large permanent surface.**
- Mural paintings **usually have the distinguishing characteristic of having the architectural elements** of the space they are painted on being harmoniously incorporated into the picture.
- There are **many techniques used for mural painting, of which the fresco is just one.**
- A mural, therefore, is a general term for a wall painting, whilst a fresco is a specific term.

## Vishwa Hindi Diwas

### Why in News?

Vishwa Hindi Diwas (VHD) or **World Hindi Day (WHD)** is celebrated every year on **10<sup>th</sup> January** to promote the Hindi language all around the world.

- Whereas Hindi Diwas is celebrated on 14<sup>th</sup> September annually, which focuses largely on recognition of the **Hindi language in India.**

### What is Vishwa Hindi Diwas?

#### ➤ About:

- It was first celebrated in 2006 **to commemorate the anniversary of the first World Hindi Conference** which was held in Nagpur on **10<sup>th</sup> January, 1975.**
  - It marks the day when **Hindi was first spoken in the United Nations' General Assembly in 1949.** It is also celebrated by Indian embassies located in various parts of the world.
- The World Hindi Secretariat building was **inaugurated in Port Louis, Mauritius in 2018.**

#### ➤ Significance:

- The purpose of this day is to **create awareness about the Indian language and promote it as a global language** around the world. It is also used to create awareness about the usage of the Indian language, and about the issues persisting around the usage and promotion of the Hindi language.

#### ➤ National Hindi Day:

- The National Hindi Day is celebrated every year in India on September 14 to mark the day of adoption of Hindi as the official language **by the Constituent Assembly of India in 1949.**

Note:

- Kaka Kalelkar, Maithili Sharan Gupta, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Seth Govindadas made important contributions to make Hindi the official language.

- Hindi is also an [eighth schedule language](#).
- Article 351 pertains to 'Directive for development of the Hindi language'.

➤ **Government Initiatives to Promote Hindi:**

- The Central Hindi Directorate was established in 1960 by the Government of India under the Ministry of Education.
- [Indian Council for Cultural Relations \(ICCR\)](#) has established 'Hindi Chairs' in various foreign universities/institutions abroad.
- LILA-Rajbhasha (Learn Indian Languages through Artificial Intelligence) is a multimedia based intelligent self-tutoring application for learning Hindi.
- E-Saral Hindi Vakya Kosh and E-MahashabdKosh Mobile App, both initiatives of the Department of Official Language, aim to harness information technology for the growth of Hindi.

- Rajbhasha Gaurav Puraskar and Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar recognise contributions to Hindi.

**Hindi Language**

- Hindi got its **name from the Persian word Hind, meaning 'land of the Indus River'**. Turk invaders in the early 11th century named the language of the region Hindi, 'language of the land of the Indus River'.
- It is the official language of India, English being the other [official language](#).
- Hindi is also spoken in some countries outside India, such as in Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago and Nepal.
- Hindi in its present form emerged through different stages, during which it was known by other names. The earliest form of old Hindi was Apabhramsa. In 400 AD Kalidas wrote a romantic play in Apabhramsa called Vikramorvashiyam.
- The modern **Devanagari script came into existence in the 11<sup>th</sup> century**.

Note:



**Key Points**

**Details**

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**Summary**

